



THE ART OF SOCIAL DANCING

*A Text Book for Teachers
and Students*

BY
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LAWRENCE A. HOSTETLER

To Miss Van Busbirk
Wishing you lots of success
Sincerely
Lawrence Hostetler

PREFACE

SOME time ago, after becoming a fairly proficient ballroom dancer, and wishing both to improve and analyze my own technique in order to more ably impart that knowledge to others, I began to look for written material on the subject. After searching assiduously for a number of years, I reached the conclusion that it was a subject about which little was definitely known. As compared to other forms of dancing, this branch of the art seemed peculiarly lacking in technical analysis.

In other words it appeared that the whole system for teaching ballroom dancing lacked a foundation, a definite working basis; that in order to learn to dance one must simply copy the position, movements, and mannerisms of other dancers. And as usually happens in such cases, all the bad faults are transmitted with the good without discrimination. An example of this tendency to copy a style of dancing without

analysis can be seen in the so-called "collegiate" dancing. Awkward in position, ungraceful in line, monotonous in execution, this manner of dancing is still considered smart by many young people.

Although I found during the course of my reading considerable material that corroborated my own experience, yet no writer gave definite lucid answers to certain fundamental questions that recurrently confronted me as a teacher, such as:

1. How can a dancer maintain perfect balance at all times?
2. What muscular action produces a smooth, level glide?
3. How can the length of one's step be altered without sacrifice to poise?
4. How can these actions be correlated with attractive lines?
5. What principles underlie the execution of turns with a partner?
6. Why do girls often lead when stepping backward?
7. How can various figures be differentiated by distinctive leads?

8. What are the characteristics of a good lead?

These and other perplexing problems were continually arising which I found difficult to explain. After a length of time however, during which I gave more than 10,000 private lessons besides teaching a large class daily, I came to certain conclusions regarding the technique of ballroom dancing, *viz.*: that all modern dancing (*i.e.*, the waltz, fox-trot, one-step, and tango), can best be developed from certain underlying principles; that these principles have their foundation in a basic dance-walk; that this in turn is a modification of the ordinary walk.

Moreover, in applying these principles to my teaching I found that most rapid progress was made when the pupil, lady or gentleman, understood and mastered this technique in the order of its logical sequence. On the other hand it was usually necessary to take the average dancer, who had only a half knowledge of what he was doing, back through these same primary stages in order to furnish him with an equipment for his further development.

Although this book has been arbitrarily divided into two sections for the purpose of correlating subject matter, it should be kept in mind that the fundamental principles set down in Part I should be applied concurrently with the pupil's acquisition of steps. Technique is only a means to an end.

While Part II may be subject to considerable alteration in accordance to popular demand for diversity in dance steps, it is hoped that the basic principles described in the first section will prove a satisfactory guidance to a good technique so long as ballroom dancing continues to follow its present trend.

No attempt will be made to explain unusual or intricate figures that as a rule are difficult to execute on the average crowded dance floor; but instead a greater emphasis will be laid upon the more important question of how to correctly execute the commonly used figures and combinations of to-day in accordance with the principles explained in Part I.

Special attention will be given to the subject of *leading* and *following*; that communicative link between a couple which prevents modern

dancing from lapsing into a monotonous round of walking so commonly seen.

Although realizing that no book can take the place of personal instruction, the author hopes that this little volume will prove of assistance to all those who wish to improve their dancing and especially to those teachers who have experienced the same difficulties as the author in attempting to explain certain movements and figures. For the beginner it may be used as a supplement to his personal instruction. Also, in view of the fact that correct ballroom dancing is now being fostered in certain public schools, it has been suggested that this volume could be used as a textbook on the subject.

In closing I wish to express my sincere appreciation to that splendid dramatic coach, artist, and author, Mr. Lester Luther, not only for his generous assistance, but also for the use of a few of his excellent exercises for inducing relaxation; to Miss Jeanne Rich for her many practical suggestions and helpful criticism; to all my associates who have either knowingly or unknowingly contributed to the success of this volume.

L. A. H.

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INTRODUCTION

DANCING is a safety valve for an energetic people. It is, probably more than any other one factor, a true criterion of a country's national temperament. Dancing finds a people in their natural, untrammelled, unaffected mood. Whether it be a New York broker at a dinner party or a Mexican peon at a fiesta; both are obeying the same inherent impulse. As a nation increases in age, solidity, and acquires a sense of nationality, it gradually adopts, along with other customs and traditions, a definite Terpsichorean art; and this art is expressive of that people's temperament. The exotic Spanish jota, the vigorous Slavic mazurka, the sinuous nautch dance of the Orient, and the rhythmic stamping of an Australian bushman accompanied by his tom-tom are all expressions of this inborn tendency to interpret music in terms of bodily movement.

America as a nation has yet to acquire a definite form of folk dancing. Perhaps it will come with the advent of a characteristic national music. The typical American jazz music of to-day may be the instigator of a definite style of dancing that might be labeled "American." At any rate we are not adverse to accepting new ideas and will try anything once, whether it be the "Charleston"; her offspring — the "Black-bottom"; or the latter's coed—the "Varsity Drag." From these ever changing attempts to seek the unusual, the eccentric, the bizarre, there is always the inevitable return to level ground; to the basic pattern or motif.

In the ballroom dancing of to-day this motif or standard is exemplified in a few couples that can easily be picked from a crowded floor. And compared to the total number that seek the recreation of a ballroom, the task of maintaining a high standard of excellence in social dancing rests with a small number of individuals.

As we follow a couple gliding without apparent effort among the less skillful, let us try to analyze their movements; to acquire the secret of their art. What have they about their dancing

that the others lack? Why are their simplest movements so fascinating? Why do most of the better dancers adopt this same style? Perhaps by observing carefully the carriage, position, and lines of the more proficient ballroom artists we can deduct a few basic principles that will give us a working platform upon which we can build the dancing of the future as well as of to-day. That is the purpose of this book.

Other forms of dancing have been given volumes of detailed description. The ballet artist's technique is so exacting that the slightest variation from the accepted standards may spell mediocrity for the performer. These classical dance movements, based upon æsthetic valuations, became universal because they are founded upon correct principles for beauty in line and movement that have been thoroughly understood for many centuries beginning with the Greeks and Egyptians.

Yet social dancing, an integral part of a nation's recreative life, enjoyed by millions of participants, has been allowed to drift aimlessly, and is sometimes tossed about so recklessly by fickle, popular taste that one now and then won-

ders if it has not retroverted to its savage ancestry.

But just because ballroom dancing is enjoyed mainly for its intrinsic pleasure by the participant alone, while her more cultivated sisters of the Terpsichorean art have an added æsthetic value for the observer, does it necessarily follow that the former cannot likewise have a foundation technique, a definite working basis? Indeed might not the pleasure of social dancing be doubly enhanced by a sureness of procedure, by a definite knowledge of how to guide your partner deftly under all conditions, while the lady at the same time follows understandingly?

Some one may ask, "Why bother with a lot of technique? I can get around the floor as well as the average." That's the point. The average dancer does not get about the floor easily. As a rule he knows very little about what he is doing. But "what is worth doing at all is worth doing well," the adage says. A man will spend hours trying to perfect his golf swing, or practice for years on the crawl stroke, yet this same person thinks nothing of struggling around the ballroom with discomfort to both himself and his partner.

Without any conception of how to lead, cramped, ungraceful position, tenseness of movement, he often labors under the illusion that his work is a credit to himself, while his partner may be praying for the music to end. A knowledge of one's defects is the first step toward improved technique.

Another may inquire, "What is there to learn? It certainly looks simple enough." Of course it looks simple. That is art. Pavlowa has instilled ambition in many an embryonic toe dancer because she makes it look so *simple*. The Parthenon is architectural perfection because of its beautiful *simplicity*. The backbone of good ballroom dancing is *simplicity* of movement. As the essays of Bacon are gems of literature because of their lack of unnecessary words, so dancing tends toward art as we eliminate unnecessary movement and effort.

The questions now arise: What are the desirable features of good dancing? What movements do we wish to eliminate? Although the very nature of ballroom dancing—it being primarily a recreative pastime—prevents the formation of any hard or fast rules, yet certain

fundamental principles can be adhered to whether one wishes to dance a waltz, tango, or fox-trot. Just as the performance of a finished musician is far superior to that of one who "plays by ear," so the dancer who proceeds with a definite knowledge of what he is doing has a great advantage over one who haphazardly slides about the floor.

After careful analysis I have been able to formulate four basic factors which, I believe, are the foundation of good ballroom dancing. These are:

- I. Poise, including
 - (a) balance
 - (b) smoothness
- II. Position, with
 - (a) line
- III. Relaxation, giving
 - (a) grace
 - (b) freedom
- IV. Ability to lead (gentleman)
Ability to follow (lady)

Perhaps some may wonder why I have not included sense of rhythm as a basic element. It is because dancing and rhythm are inseparable. It

is the very essence of dancing, as it is of everything else in the universe. Take away rhythm and you take away the reason for dancing. But since we seem to be a rather important part of the universe, we have all been endowed with a sense of rhythm, some more lavishly than others. Unfortunately, however, not all of us have been gifted with an ear for musical rhythm. Herein lies the difficulty, coördination of music and step.

While we do not expect a discrepancy of such nature on the part of professional artists, with ballroom dancers it is only too apparent. Although a couple may glide about the floor with little or no regard for the music, as many of them do, yet this lack of synchronization gives a sense of discomfort—like an instrument out of tune.

Do not infer from these statements that I underestimate the importance of rhythm; or that one's ear for musical rhythm cannot be trained. I have found from experience that the latter quality can be greatly developed and, indeed, dancing is one of the best methods of developing it. But I have also discovered that the ability to keep time with music depends largely upon two basic factors: poise and relaxation. In other

words, one must have his body under perfect control if he expects it to respond to his mental commands; *e.g.*, the conductor of an orchestra may have a highly developed sense of rhythm with perfectly coördinated arm movements, while as a dancer he might be a total failure until he likewise acquired control of his lower body.

It is not from lack of rhythmical instinct that the ballrooms are crowded with mediocre performers. The desire to dance or to watch dancing is as innate as the impulse to sing when happy.

Perhaps the real cause of the inaptitude of the general public is a false impression of its seeming simplicity. This creates a feeling of apathy toward improvement which naturally tends to produce a low standard of excellence. The older dances such as the polka, schottische, and minuet, requiring considerable dexterity, were consequently studied and practiced by all those who took pride in their dancing. Since the advent of the fox-trot with its plain basic walk, too many are content to allow the burden of their efforts to rest upon their kind but long-suffering friends.

This tendency to follow the line of least re-

sistance explains also why two of the most beautiful of ballroom dances, the waltz and French tango, are known to only a few in this country.

Another difficulty lies in the failure of most instructors to analyze the fundamental movements which are absolutely essential to the perfection of the various combinations.

Every type of dancing has a certain foundation which, when mastered, makes its further development natural and easy. The present mode of ballroom dancing is, I believe, most easily understood by a study of the correct everyday walk. This will be the subject of Chapter I.

PART I

The ART OF SOCIAL DANCING

CHAPTER I

WALKING VS. DANCING

(Poise: Balance and Smoothness)

It has been said, with considerable truth, that if you can walk you can dance. But more important is the fact that your *manner* of walking determines to a great extent *how* you will dance. Bad habits in posture and carriage are responsible for a large percentage of the host of mediocre ballroom dancers. Authorities estimate that 75 per cent of school children have faulty weight-bearing positions. Since walking is so closely allied to the dancing of to-day, let us analyze the correct position and try to ascertain the features that may be applied to ballroom technique.

The first requirement of a good carriage is to stand straight. To secure this position easily,

place your back to the wall with the heels, calves, hips, shoulders, and head touching. The very fact that with the majority of people the hips will be touching the wall while the shoulders and head are still several inches away, indicates clearly the need of attention to our everyday posture. The Malay woman acquires a graceful carriage by carrying a basket balanced on her head. The West Point cadet obtains the same result by keeping "chest up and eyes front."

Let us look again to our West Pointer. As he receives the command, "Forward! March!" there will be a noticeable forward swaying of the entire body before the foot leaves the ground. Gravity is at work. The initial movement comes from the torso with the legs following; this preliminary swaying being quite essential to easy dancing as we shall see later.

It is this mode of walking that we wish to consider as a groundwork for ballroom dancing. Let us note some of the most applicable features:

- (1) The initial movement is from the body as if pushing with the chest.
- (2) The legs are swung almost passively from the hips.

- (3) The toes are pointed directly forward.
- (4) The weight rolls smoothly from the heel to the ball of the foot and is carried more to the outer edge of the sole. It is only when barefoot or when wearing moccasins that one walks like an Indian with the ball of the foot touching the ground first.
- (5) The arms swing easily from the shoulders, their movement being motivated by the bodily action.
- (6) Lastly and most important, the chin is lifted which tends to pull up the chest. This in turn draws in the abdomen, brings forward the hips, and makes for an easy graceful carriage.

However, the acquirement of an elastic step is only the beginning of a good dance technique. It lacks two essential qualities, namely: balance and smoothness. These two essentials may be acquired by a simple procedure—bending the knees. Much has been said about swinging the legs from the hips with the knee straight, but little has been mentioned about the also important matter of knee flexion. I shall explain more

fully in the following chapter this important phase of dancing, and also show how the illusion of dancing with straight knees is obtained.

First let us understand why the knees must bend in order to glide smoothly with balance. If you stand perfectly erect and reach with one foot in any direction you will find the distance to be rather short—about twelve to eighteen inches, depending upon the length of one's legs. Now if you bend the supporting knee, you will discover that the length of your step is increased in proportion to the amount the supporting knee is flexed. This brings us to our first general principle. *The degree to which the supporting knee is bent determines the length of one's step.*

In order to maintain perfect balance while dancing, it is absolutely necessary that the weight remain on one foot until the other foot is in place. Consequently, if both knees are kept nearly straight, the step of a necessity will be rather short. On the other hand, by flexing the supporting knee the length of one's step may be greatly increased.

To acquire the second essential of poise—smoothness—*i.e.*, gliding on the same level with

no up or down movement of the body, it is necessary to bend the knees exactly the same amount with each step. An excellent exercise for acquiring this habit is as follows: Stand on the right foot with the knees well bent. With the left toe tap forward and backward as far as possible without disarranging the body in any manner. Especially try to eliminate any up or down movement which might be caused by straightening the supporting knee. Change feet and practice until you have gained perfect control of the leg muscles. Although one may dance without maintaining the same level, as in the toddle or other eccentric dances, it is much better to acquire first a basic groundwork from which the various styles may be derived.

Thus far we have considered only the forward walk. We found that by allowing the knees to bend exactly the same amount with each step one could glide smoothly and with perfect balance.

Now let us analyze ballroom dancing from another viewpoint—the backward walk. Although as a rule the gentleman moves forward most of the time and the lady backward, both should be able to glide equally well in either direction.

This ability is obtained as a result of keeping the correct fundamental position which may be described as follows: Stand with the weight on the left foot while holding the right back off the floor (preferably before a mirror). Now try to lift the left or supporting heel. You will probably find it carries considerable weight. If you tried to dance in this position—that is, with weight on the supporting heel—you would discover that with every step you made, your heel would come down heavily; precisely in accordance to the amount of weight carried by the supporting heel before you took your first step. As a result you would be classified as a heavy dancer.

The terms “light” and “heavy” dancing have little to do with *avoirdupois* as such, but they have everything to do with the manner in which that poundage is manipulated. Many comparatively heavy persons dance more lightly than those of slight build; probably because of necessity they have acquired a good sense of balance.

Since every one wishes to be considered a light dancer, I will try to explain what I believe to be the one most important factor in acquiring this

elusive quality. Take the above position again with all the weight on the left foot, the knee bent (hold to something if necessary). Extend the right leg back *off the floor*. Now carry the hips forward until you can lift the supporting heel easily; *i.e.*, having all the weight on the ball of the left foot. If you step backward holding the hips in this same position, you will find that you can let the heels down softly with each step. *This is the secret of light dancing*. In order to maintain this lightness the position of the body must not be altered when changing direction. There is a tendency to allow the hips to sway back when moving forward, which throws the weight onto the heel.

Not that one cannot walk or dance easily without standing correctly, for a large majority of the population prove daily that that is possible. But to dance smoothly and with perfect balance are only two phases of the problem.

Our appreciation and enjoyment of attractive lines brings us to the consideration of the second basic factor—*position*. A couple may execute intricate figures with feathery lightness, yet appear ludicrous if they disregard position and line.

A racing camel or an elephant can move swiftly, but we are fascinated more by the dainty lightness of an antelope or the noble grace of a wild horse. Ballroom dancing without regard for line may be pleasurable enough to the participants, but it does not impress onlookers favorably.

CHAPTER II

POSITION AND LINE

IN this chapter we are dealing with one of the most important phases of good dancing: the question of position or how to appear to best advantage with a partner. Our first impressions of a couple are derived from the general picture they present. Assuming that we have mastered the two requirements of poise—balance and smoothness—as described in the preceding chapter, let us try to apply these principles while with a partner.

POSITION IN GENERAL

While facing each other in the closed position, the first essential for easy dancing is to maintain a position parallel to that of your partner. This can easily be done by looking over his or her right shoulder. Thus while keeping the feet in line, the body at the same time is brought slightly

to the right of your co-dancer which permits one to step with no danger of knee interference.

The so-called "collegiate" or semi-open position with the girl carried on her partner's hip has little to commend it, and were it not for the fact that so many would-be college boys and girls adopt this style I would give it no mention.

POSITION—UPPER BODY

A famous ballet director tells us that while 10 per cent of an audience are observing a dancer's feet the other 90 per cent are watching the upper body. Many a skillful couple shows to poor advantage because of an improper carriage of the shoulders, head, or arms. It is probably true that not more than one couple in fifty carry the upper body gracefully.

Beginning with the head let us remember that it should be carried well back with the chin slightly raised. This permits one to lift the chest, which flattens the abdomen. But as you elevate the chest *drop the shoulders*. How many needlessly tire themselves by useless tension of this part of the body!

POSITION—THE ARMS

Let us first consider the gentleman's right or guiding arm. He places it firmly about the lady's waist with the arm held from the body at an angle of about 45 degrees. The hand with the fingers held easily together is placed, as a rule, just below the left shoulder blade. Although their anatomical relationships may alter circumstances, the essential requirements are:

- (1) To keep a position parallel to that of your partner, and
- (2) To allow freedom of movement.

Reaching too far around the waist—as do a majority of dancers—tends to throw the body and feet out of line causing the knees to interfere, while a tight grip prevents flexible movement.

The lady places her left or corresponding hand, with the fingers together, on the gentleman's right shoulder or upper arm depending upon their relative heights. Her arm is kept in contact with that of her partner, but never at any time does she allow it to rest there with any weight. In general the arms should form the

same curve as closely as possible. The habit that many girls have of hooking their left arm under the gentleman's right elbow should be carefully avoided. It not only makes an awkward angle at the elbow, but also interferes with her partner's lead.

The gentleman's left arm, although having the least to do, is oftentimes the most conspicuous feature of his position. Even though the sole requirements are to hold it gracefully and inconspicuously, it is usually the most awkward, outstanding, dangerous section of the dancer's anatomy; dangerous because at any moment one is apt to find a sharp elbow in the ribs or a thumb in the eye. Why so many gentlemen persist in carrying this arm in such constrained, ungainly positions, often with considerable discomfort to their partners, is hard to understand.

If the floor is not crowded, the best position is with the arm extended directly to the side (but not stiffened), and the hand carried slightly below the level of the shoulder. On a crowded floor the only change necessary is to lower the entire arm until within a few inches of the side. In this position it does not detract from the general ap-

pearance while at the same time it affords protection against jostling and gives more room to other couples without discomfort.

As the lady takes her position, she lifts the right arm from the shoulder palm down, shoulder, elbow, and wrist relaxed. With her arm extended slightly below the level of the shoulder, the hand may be taken by the gentleman in a manner that shows it to best advantage. The main requisites are:

- (1) To keep the entire arm relaxed—a gentle grasp.
- (2) To keep the palms apart. The common fault of holding with the palms together is not only unpleasant, especially during warm weather, but also makes the hands appear larger.
- (3) To allow the wrists to curve slightly outward, thus producing an unbroken line extending from the gentleman's left shoulder to the lady's right. Their arms should also be carried on the same plane so that viewed from the former's back, the lady's arm would not be visible.

Many dancers have a mistaken idea that "style" may be obtained by eccentric positions of the arms. Instead it merely detracts from the general picture, as a wrong color of hat may destroy the effect of a costume, or as a badly placed piece of furniture throws a room out of harmony.

LINE—IN GENERAL

The picture that should be presented with every backward step is that of one continuous curve extending from the back of the head to the heel. In order to keep this curve intact, *i.e.*, to eliminate all angles, one must be conscious of three main points, *viz.*: the neck, knee, and hips.

The angle (or forward curve) at the neck caused by dropping the head, which also tends to make round shoulders, can easily be corrected by lifting the chin. When stepping backward, the head in ballroom dancing may be carried further back than in ordinary walking, since it gives a completeness to the curve of the body occasioned by the backward steps. Do not look down while dancing if you wish to appear to good advantage.

The angle at the knee requires more practice

to eliminate. To accomplish this every forward or backward step should be made with the knee fully extended. Stepping with a straight knee is just as important as bending the supporting one. It is this sweeping, unbroken line from head to heel that gives the illusion of dancing with both knees straight. Since a moving object attracts attention more quickly than a stationary one, the supporting knee may be considerably flexed as long as the stepping or moving leg is fully extended before it receives any weight. This important fact may be restated in the form of the following general principle: *While the supporting knee is slightly bent, the moving leg is always swung from the hips with the knee and ankle extended which in turn flex as they receive weight.* The mechanics of the basic dance-walk will be more fully explained in the following chapter.

Between the two points described are the hips which are probably the worst offenders in the matter of bad lines. How many maintain a position that would permit a vertical line to extend from the shoulder through the hip-joint to the ball of the supporting foot? Instead the hips usually extend considerably back of this imagi-

nary line becoming the most prominent part of one's anatomy. As we noted in the preceding chapter, the forward swaying of the hips makes for lighter dancing by throwing the weight onto the ball of the foot, while if they are carried back, the knees must be bent proportionally to maintain one's balance.

The large majority of dancers make a poor appearance on the floor because they violate the above principles. With head down, hips back, both knees bent, and angular arms, they too

often present this picture  instead of 

Before closing, however, a word of warning may be necessary. Many girls in trying to obtain this graceful curve have a tendency to bend back with the upper body from the hips which results in an abnormal posture. To obtain the curve correctly take the proper standing position, sway forward with the entire body until the weight is on the balls of the feet, slightly bend one knee and swing the other leg as far back as possible without stiffening. At the same time carry the

head well back and lift the chest which gives a slight arch to the back. If now the shoulders are relaxed and the arms held easily, as described, the result is sure to be pleasing. And very important is the fact that exactly the same position of the body is maintained for both the forward and backward walk.

CHAPTER III

THE BASIC DANCE-WALK ANALYZED

JUST as a correct swing with one club in golf will insure a good swing with each of the others, so in ballroom dancing the basic walk correctly done will enable a person to execute the various figures and combinations without difficulty as they are all subject to the same underlying principles as previously outlined. Chapters I and II prepared us for our first steps. After learning how to glide evenly and with perfect balance alone, we then assumed the position best adapted for obtaining the same results with a partner. We are now ready to analyze the coördinate movements of a couple as they begin to dance.

As a rule the gentleman begins by stepping forward with the left foot as the lady swings back her right. The first movement *of the body*, however, should be neither forward nor backward but *directly down*. Otherwise the weight would fall on the step unless it were taken very short.

This downward movement is the result of bending the supporting knee, the gentleman's right and the lady's left, which recalls our first general principle that the length of one's step is determined by the degree to which the supporting knee is flexed. Since comparatively long steps give a better appearance than shorter ones, it naturally follows that a couple must dance on a slightly lower level than would be necessary for ordinary walking. In this manner a shorter person by sufficiently bending the supporting knee, can take steps equally as long as a taller partner. And if the steps are made correctly with an extended knee and ankle, there need be no fear of appearing shorter since there will be an unbroken line extending from the head to the toe. This low gliding movement is especially noticeable in the Argentine tango, but the same principle applies to all ballroom dancing.

As we begin our basic walk, let us correct a fault common to most beginners. It is the tendency they have of stepping with the feet apart instead of directly forward and backward because of a fear of hitting their partner's foot. If the lady follows correctly, as will be explained in the

chapter on "Leading and Following," there will be no danger of the feet touching that are on the same side, *e.g.*, the gentleman's left with the lady's right or vice versa. But on the other hand, both should endeavor with every step to place the foot as *closely as possible to the one diagonally opposite; i.e.*, having first the left feet together and then the right—alternating with each step. This necessitates toeing directly forward as in walking in order to keep the feet on a parallel line. Our third general principle may thus be stated as follows: *With every forward or backward step place your foot as closely as possible to that of your partner which is diagonally opposite.*

As stated in the preceding chapter, the bodily posture remains unchanged regardless of the direction of one's step. But the action of the legs for the backward walk differs considerably from that of the forward walk.

When walking backwards *the foot goes first*. Each step is begun by lifting the knee which partially raises the foot permitting its being thrown backwards with the toe lightly grazing the floor.

When walking forward, on the other hand, *the body initiates the movement* while the foot is the last to move. This forward walk may be compared to the downward swing of a golf club. The arms in the latter case can be considered as a continuation of the shaft. The motive power is supplied by the shoulders through the body with the arms acting merely as a control to regulate the speed and direction of the club head. In a similar manner the hips and body furnish the motive power for ballroom dancing, while the legs use only enough force to control the action. Just as the club head is the last to be set into motion, the foot in dancing likewise tends to remain in place as long as possible. And lastly, as the follow through of the golf club as it chases after the ball is so important to a good golf swing, the follow through of the foot as it glides along the floor until the knee is fully extended is just as essential to a good dance technique. The axiom in golf: "Take care of your body and the arms will take care of themselves" may be applied equally well to dancing by substituting the word "legs" for "arms."

The reason for the ungainly walk of most be-

ginner lies in their failure to acquire these fundamental movements. Instead of the body leading and activating the movements of the lower limbs, it often appears that the legs are pulling along the body. This awkward manner of leading with the knees often results in hitting the partner's knee or foot.

Contrary to popular belief, a good forward walk in ballroom dancing is more difficult to acquire than the backward walk. This is due to the fact that a forward step requires perfect timing. The complete extension of the leg must exactly coincide with the transfer of weight which is instantly followed by a slight flexion of the knee as the weight is being transferred. These three actions must be so closely blended as to appear simultaneous.

Whereas in the backward walk, since the foot goes first, the transfer of weight can be more readily controlled. In fact the two actions can be entirely separated without sacrifice to smoothness or poise.

A common tendency to be avoided, especially when stepping backward, is to allow the foot to swing outward describing a semicircle on the

floor instead of following a straight line. This fault can be corrected by picking up the feet as described and stepping with the knees held closely together.

Also, in swinging the leg backward one must be careful to extend the ankle as well as the knee. By reaching with the toe several inches may thus be added to the length of one's step which gives, too, a much better appearance. Then as the weight is being transferred to the ball of the foot, the ankle is relaxed allowing the heel to roll lightly to the floor without, however, receiving any appreciable amount of weight, while the knee bends sufficiently to maintain the proper level and balance.

In connection with the analysis of our basic walk there is one more item of importance: the action of the hips. As we observed before, their position on a vertical line extending from the shoulders through the ball of the foot is essential to light dancing and a pleasing appearance. *This forward position of the hips should not be altered regardless of the direction of one's step.*

There is however, a slight movement of the hips sidewise with every step as in walking,

which is one of the essentials for gracefulness. This inconspicuous swaying is always *toward the foot that receives the weight*. Besides giving a subtle flexibility to the whole body, it aids materially in maintaining perfect poise in the execution of many figures as will be explained later.

One must be careful, however, to differentiate between this hip action and a bending at the waist. The latter movement, so commonly seen, results in an exaggerated swinging of the shoulders which in turn tends to produce a pump-handle effect of the gentleman's left arm. The former motion, on the other hand, gives the illusion of the hips moving under the body; just as an acrobat can balance on his hands by manipulation of the shoulders while the legs remain stationary.

The basic dance-walk, as described, is the foundation of the modern fox-trot and one-step. (They both have exactly the same technique.) Moreover, all of the fundamental principles thus far noted, with one or two slight exceptions, apply equally well to the waltz and tango.

The most important points may be summarized as follows:

- (1) Assume the correct dancing position with a partner. (Review Chapter II.)
- (2) Slightly flex the supporting knee.
- (3) Swing the other leg freely from the hip with the knee and ankle fully extended.
- (4) Carry the hips well forward, and at the same time have the sensation of pushing with the chest.
- (5) Glide smoothly into each step with the knees held closely together.

CHAPTER IV

RELAXATION: GRACEFULNESS AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

As the airplane lacks the grace of an eagle, or the submarine the mobility of a seal, so dancing without this necessary flexibility likewise tends to become machine-like and expressionless.

A poet tells us that, "Grace is beauty of form under the influence of freedom." It is this rhythmic quality, so prevalent in Nature from the swaying trees to the undulating waves, that makes dancing probably the most fascinating of the arts. It is because most dancers move with such constricted movements and with no regard for line that one rarely sees a graceful couple on the floor.

Gracefulness with most civilized humans is an acquired characteristic. To quote from Schiller, "Grace is a beauty not given by nature but produced by the subject itself; and as the beauty of the human form does honor to the Creator, so do

cheerfulness and grace do honor to their possessor. One is a natural, the other a personal gift." And again, "Grace must be always natural and involuntary (or at least must appear so) and a person must never display a consciousness of it."

But one cannot expect to move gracefully or to assume attractive attitudes without the knowledge of how to properly distribute one's weight. For this reason in our analysis of ballroom technique we first considered *poise*—including balance and smoothness—as the foundation of good dancing. We then studied the *position* best adapted to dancing easily with a partner, keeping in mind at the same time the rules for *line*.

But with all this one's dancing would still be in the pupa stage of development until it received the beautifying and softening influence of relaxation. It is this quality that helps to make curves out of angles; that welds the movements of the body into a unified whole. Relaxation conserves energy; conservation of energy is the foundation of grace.

As a rule, any new and unfamiliar action is accompanied by a stiffening of the body which

tends to make the act difficult and awkward. Especially is this true of ballroom dancing which not only requires perfect coördination of one's own movements but also careful synchronization with those of a partner. For this reason the ability to relax depends largely upon the degree to which the preceding steps have been mastered. Although we are emphasizing its importance in this chapter, one should constantly think relaxation while learning to dance.

After a certain point is reached the improvement a dancer makes is determined largely by the ease and freedom with which his steps are taken. Most rapid progress can be made by relaxing consciously one section of the body at a time. By degrees the whole body can thus be brought under control, which insures definite well-defined actions. For example, during one dance emphasize swinging the entire leg freely from the hip as if it were a flexible rod. Allow the hips to do the work with the leg following with no apparent effort. Especially try to relax the muscles of the thigh and knee since it is their excessive tension that produces a jerky step.

At another time concentrate upon freedom of

the upper body. A dancer, as a rule, can be accurately judged by the manner in which this section of his body is carried. Think constantly of chest *up* and shoulders *down* until it becomes an habitual posture. In conjunction with relaxed shoulders try particularly to gain freedom with the arms. It is the rigid arms and sharp elbows that make dancing on a crowded floor a discomfort.

Although dancing by itself tends to produce a graceful carriage, more rapid progress can be made by the regular practice of suitable exercises. On the other hand many forms of exercise, while producing a strong, healthy body, do not necessarily promote grace and flexibility. In fact, without proper supervision one may become muscle-bound by the excessive employment of one set of muscles.

The exercises that are given in this chapter are of two kinds. The first group is designed to develop strength and flexibility. The object of the second group is to promote relaxation and, hence, freedom of movement.

As a summary of what constitutes a graceful movement—the essence of good dancing—the

following quotation from Herbert Spencer's "Principles of Psychology" is quite appropriate: "An awkward motion is one that implies a sudden change of direction, angularity, destruction of much momentum, excess of muscular effort; whereas a motion called graceful—a motion in curved lines following one into another without break—is a motion in which little momentum is destroyed, no undue exertion thrown on any muscle, no power lost."

GROUP I

Exercise 1:

OBJECT: To strengthen the muscles of the upper and lower leg; to give flexibility to the knee and ankle joints.

- (a) Hold with one hand to something about waist high for support. The foot of the bed or the back of a chair will serve the purpose. With the heels together and knees turned as far as possible to the sides, lower yourself slowly to a squatting position and rise. Keep the heels on the floor as long as possible. Hold the back perfectly straight, while being

careful not to lean forward from the hips. Take four counts of fox-trot music to go down and four counts to rise.

Do the same exercise twice as fast.

- (b) Practice with the feet placed about one foot apart.

Exercise 2:

OBJECT: To strengthen the muscles of the waist and thigh; to give freedom at the hip-joint.

- (a) Stand as in Exercise 1 with the left hand on the support. Place the right foot in front of the left with the toes pointing well out to the sides and the feet together. Lift the front leg forward as high as possible *while keeping both knees straight*. Lower to original position. Always stretch the ankle and foot while rotating the whole leg outward as much as possible.

Turn and practice lifting the other leg.

- (b) Standing in the first position with the right foot in front, lift the leg directly to the side while keeping both knees straight. Stretch the ankle and foot, and at the same time turn the heel forward.

Finish first in back and then in front of the supporting foot.

Turn and do the same exercise with the left leg.

- (c) Stand facing the support with one foot in back of the other. Keeping both knees straight swing the back leg up as high as possible and finish in the original position.

Place the other foot in back and practice as before.

An excellent variation of these three exercises is to lift the leg slowly into position (4 counts), hold (4 counts), lower (4 counts), and rest (4 counts).

Although Exercises 1 and 2 appear very simple, they are sure to bring results if practiced regularly ten or fifteen minutes a day. Authorities on physical education tell us that a comparatively easy exercise done regularly over a long period of time is more beneficial than a very strenuous one done less often. It is for this reason that ballet dancers, who practice daily for years, have such strong, supple, well-developed bodies.

Exercise 3:

OBJECT: To develop a supple waist.

Stand facing a firm support with the heels together and the toes turned out to the sides. While supporting your weight with both arms, allow the hips to sway as far as possible to the right while the upper body is inclined to the left, forming nearly a right angle with the legs. The pull of the muscles should be felt directly at the side, and in order to derive the full benefit from the stretch both knees must be held straight and the heels kept on the floor. Sway to the left in the same manner and repeat a number of times; first slowly and then faster.

Exercise 4:

OBJECT: To develop a flexible back; to stretch the muscles of the abdomen and chest.

Lie face downward on the floor. Brace yourself with both arms against the floor, and as you force back the shoulders, push the hips down. Look for the wall at your back and at the same time elevate the chest. As much force can be used as desired.

Exercise 5:

OBJECT: To strengthen the abdominal muscles.

- (a) Lie on your back with the arms overhead or at your side. Lift both legs with straight knees and, if possible, touch the floor in back of the head with the toes. Repeat until the muscles become fatigued.
- (b) From the same position lift the body to a sitting position while keeping the legs straight and on the floor. For variation lock the fingers back of the neck and, as you lean forward, try to touch the elbows to the knees.
Repeat until tired.

Exercise 6:

OBJECT: To strengthen the muscles of the shoulders, chest, and arms.

Lie face downward on the floor. Place the hands about eighteen inches apart and in line with the shoulders. With the weight supported between the hands and feet, raise and lower the body as a unit until the arms show signs of weariness. Be careful not to allow the hips to sag, but hold the entire body firmly in one position.

Although these few exercises will not by themselves make a dancer, they will at least furnish the equipment of good muscle tone and circula-

tion by bringing into action practically every muscle in the body. In order to obtain marked results make these or similar exercises a part of your daily routine.

GROUP II

Exercise 1:

OBJECT: To promote relaxation and freedom of the arms.

Lift one arm full length above the head as if it were a heavy weight. Suddenly devitalize the muscles and allow it to fall lifeless to the side.

Practice the same exercise a number of times with the other arm.

Exercise 2:

OBJECT: To produce a relaxed condition of the muscles about the neck.

- (a) With the eyes closed and the lower jaw hanging loosely allow the head to drop forward until the chin rests on the chest. Lift the head slowly, as if it were very heavy, until it finally topples over backward. Repeat several times both forward and backward and to the sides.

- (b) Permit the head to roll easily in a circle from one position to another.

Exercise 3:

OBJECT: To promote relaxation of the leg muscles.

Lie on your back on a bed or mat. Slowly lift one leg as if it were an exceedingly heavy weight. As it reaches a point of balance overhead, de-vitalize the muscles and let it drop like a dead weight.

Practice in the same manner with the other leg.

Exercise 4:

OBJECT: To stretch and relax the upper body and arms.

Stand firmly with the feet spread apart. Let the arms dangle loosely at the sides. Twist the trunk vigorously first to the right and then to the left. The momentum will cause the swinging arms to slap the body, both front and back, with each twist.

Exercise 5:

OBJECT: To stretch and relax the muscles of the leg.

While holding to something for support with the left hand, swing the right leg forward and back like a pendulum as far as it will go in either direction. Let the ball of the foot brush the floor each time.

Practice similarly with the left.

Exercise 6:

OBJECT: To develop the ability to relax the entire body.

This is the consummation of the preceding exercises in which the whole body is relaxed very gradually by successive degrees. It should require several minutes to complete the folding and unfolding.

Begin first to relax the face by closing the eyes; then drop the lower jaw. Gradually allow the head to droop until it reaches the limit of its normal action. Continue the downward movement by very slowly allowing the body to bend forward from the hips with the shoulders and arms hanging limp. After reaching the limit of the forward bend, sink gradually to one knee until you feel "all in a heap."

From this position the unfolding begins in reverse order, but just as slowly, *viz.*: Regain the feet, straighten the torso, raise the head, open the

eyes, and finish with a deep inhalation while stretching upward on tiptoe to your fullest height.

If you imagine yourself a towering giant as you begin the exercise, it will aid materially in producing a heavy slowness.

Although relaxation while dancing is not carried to such an extreme, since the muscles would lack vitality and elasticity, it will, however, in conjunction with the first group of exercises, produce a sensitive muscular response, which in turn will result in *plasticity* of movement—the product of *controlled relaxation*.

The exercises in Groups I and II should be gone through regularly at least once a day. As a suggestion, the first group might be practiced in the morning on arising to start the blood to circulating freely, while the second group could be used just before retiring since they act as a sedative to the nerves inducing sleep.

CHAPTER V

LEADING AND FOLLOWING

I HAVE reserved this subject for the final chapter on general technique because it is the culmination of good dancing. Position, line, and grace mean little if one cannot lead or follow. Formerly, when dancing was a question of learning certain definite figures that were always done in the same manner, leading was either mutual or unnecessary. Now however, with variety and individuality the keynote of ballroom dancing, the nature of every variation must be clearly indicated. Since this task falls upon the gentleman, it follows that dancing will be either interesting or monotonous depending upon his knowledge of steps with their accompanying lead. A lady, moreover, even though an excellent dancer, is nevertheless handicapped to the extent of her partner's ability—or inability.

Yet a gentleman often blames his partner for not following when many times he gives no indi-

cation of what the figure is to be. Dancing with a partner must always be a coöperative affair.

Many experienced dancers unconsciously give a strong lead while their partners usually follow in the same manner. As far as I have been able to find, however, no one has hitherto explained definitely how to designate various figures by means of an accurate lead consciously given. Yet the extent of one's progress depends largely upon the ability one has acquired to indicate or follow a lead.

If the lady is to be able to follow easily, it is necessary that she has first of all *perfect balance*. If her movements are to be in harmony with those of her partner, she must be able to *glide smoothly* with no up or down movement of the body. If she wishes to avoid knee interference, she must maintain a position which allows her to step on a line parallel to the line of her partner's steps. If she desires to be led with little effort, she must above all things *relax*. Thus we find that the ability to follow depends entirely upon the basic factors as explained in the preceding chapters.

But since the ability to lead well is also dependent upon the same principles, a clear dis-

inction must be made between the two actions. Contrary to popular belief, a couple in ballroom dancing *do not* (or *should not*) *step at the same time*. *The one who transfers his weight first is leading*. Since the lady is supposed to follow, she must *never allow the stepping foot to receive any weight until after her partner has transferred the weight to his corresponding foot*.

If one wishes to clearly demonstrate this principle to one's own satisfaction, execute a "Side-ward Glide" figure with a partner. The step is made by placing one foot directly to the side and drawing the other foot to it (see full explanation under "The Fox-Trot," Part II). If the gentleman is leading, his foot will be placed to the side an appreciable length of time ahead of his partner's. This relative difference in time between the transference of weight should be maintained with each and every step. In the plain forward and backward walk the difference is less noticeable to an observer due to the fact that both feet are on the floor before the completion of the step making it appear as if they were being taken simultaneously.

Now if the lady with each step transfers the

weight after the gentleman, it must result in a slight pressure being exerted against her partner at all times. In other words she follows the line of least resistance. Pliability is a quality that every girl must cultivate for good ballroom dancing.

The occasion for many girls taking the lead away from their partners is during the backward walk. This is usually caused by one of three reasons:

(1) Lack of poise from not knowing how to maintain the balance while increasing the length of one's step.

(2) Carrying the hips too far back, or leaning backwards from the waist which throws the weight onto the heels, resulting in a loss of balance.

(3) Tensing the muscles of the leg which causes the foot to be thrown back too quickly.

Relaxation and poise will correct these faults and give the ability to follow.

The important fact that every lady should realize is that *she alone can determine whether or not she will lead or follow when walking backward*. In this position the gentleman has no control of

the lead. The reason is this: Since the gentleman's right hand is placed at the lady's back, he can exert a pressure only forward, sidewise, up, or down; never directly away from him. Thus no matter how tightly he holds his partner, when he is walking forward the lead is none the less a pushing with the shoulder or body. Since the lead cannot be indicated with the right hand at this point, the arm should be partly relaxed, which is not only restful but also makes any succeeding lead more noticeable.

How, then, is the lady to know for a certainty that she is following when stepping backward. Many lead unconsciously. The only solution is for the lady to allow herself to be *pushed* back. This pressure, however slight, is exerted by the gentleman's right shoulder or the body. In other words if the lady is perfectly poised and relaxed, she will be able to wait for this lead or pressure from her partner.

Although the gentleman has no control of the lead when walking forward, any deviation from this straight line must be clearly indicated by a pressure with the right hand or arm. As long as the figure is merely a change of direction with

no alteration of either rhythm or tempo, the lead is quite simple; a firm pressure to indicate the new line of movement while constantly holding the partner in the same relative position. With the resumption of the forward walk, however, the leading arm should be slightly relaxed.

Thus far the discussion of the lead has covered only those points that many dancers acquire naturally. There is, however, one phase of leading that has been entirely overlooked by most gentlemen. It is the difference between a weak and a strong lead. It is not so much a question of pressure as it is of *timing*. Every lead should be given on the count or step *preceding* the new figure or change of direction. In other words, the hand must work ahead of the feet, *e.g.*, if one is to execute a two-step (see under "The Fox-Trot") beginning with the left foot, the lead should be given as the weight is being transferred to the right foot. The tendency is to indicate the lead simultaneously with the beginning of the new figure. This fails to give the lady time enough to adjust her movements easily to the new situation especially when dancing rapidly.

Thus far we have considered the lead for only

those variations that are merely a change of direction. Other more distinctive figures such as the two-step and hesitation have definite leads that must always be clearly indicated. With the description of the figures and combinations in Part II the corresponding lead will be included.

CHAPTER VI

STYLE—SUMMARY

“STYLES may come and styles may go, but dancing goes on forever,” to paraphrase a familiar quotation. And styles change in ballroom dancing just as in clothes and morals. In fact, as intimated in the introduction, the same environmental background colors all three. For example the stately minuet in the time of hoop-skirts and exalted chivalry could hardly be associated with the present styles in dress, dance, and morals.

Through the changing decades there is still with us, none the less, the one dance that has stood the test of time—the waltz. There are gratifying indications that its former popularity will be revived.

Another dance which from a standpoint of age, beauty, and practicability must be given special consideration is the ballroom tango. Although it is not widely known in this country, with the

Parisian public at present this dance leads the waltz and fox-trot in popularity.

The fox-trot, because of its fundamental simplicity yet capable of infinite variation, still holds first place with the American public; the position it will probably maintain for several years at least.

The one-step, which developed from a plain, fast walk—one count to each step—is now danced as a fast fox-trot using many of the same figures.

Thus with the last two dances executed alike except for tempo, modern dancing is taught as a rule to either waltz, tango or fox-trot rhythm. In regard to the countless “hops,” “shuffles,” and “toddles” that continually spring up from nowhere under various names and as quickly pass out, I shall not discuss in this book. If the foundation is well laid, one can easily acquire these eccentric variations as they originate.

Although it is interesting to trace the evolution of the dance and its relation to ways of living, that has been ably done by many writers. In this chapter I wish to deal with individual style which is defined by Webster as a “distinctive mode of

execution.” The very fact that style implies personal taste and individuality makes it difficult to set down any definite rules. Indeed, one of the greatest charms of modern dancing lies in its flexibility. The era of routined steps in the ballroom has passed. Individualism, governed by the knowledge of how to lead or follow, expresses the trend of modern dancing.

A gentleman's style however to be distinctive must include much more than a mere knowledge of steps and the ability to deftly guide a partner among other couples. It requires, also, a position that is attractive to onlookers; a feeling for line; a well developed sense of rhythm; a firm support for one's partner that still enables her to step easily; the execution of figures in a definite, precise manner yet smoothly and without visible effort; and last but not least, courtesy.

A gentleman's style, while subject to these underlying principles, is nevertheless colored largely by his temperament, personality, and character. Individual mannerisms are therefore apt to be acquired, if one is not watchful, which not only detract from one's general appearance, but also display one's partner to disadvantage.

A few of these more common tendencies are:

1. Holding the head down.
2. Bending forward too much at the waist allowing the hips to protrude.
3. Side-bending at the waist with each step; causing
4. A pump-handle movement of the left arm.
5. Holding the left arm rigid.
6. Hunching the shoulders or holding one higher than the other.
7. Gripping your partner with the right arm in a manner that prevents her from stepping easily.
8. Not holding her firmly enough for support and protection.
9. Leaning too far back causing the legs to lead the body instead of vice versa.
10. Dancing with continually bent knees.
11. Dancing with continually straight knees.
12. Bobbing up and down with every step instead of gliding on the same level.
13. Stepping from the knee instead of swinging the leg from the hip̄.
14. Not allowing the knee to give softly whenever it receives weight.

15. Failure to extend the ankle, especially when stepping backward.

16. Not relaxing the muscles of the thighs and hips which tends to produce a jerky, uneven step instead of a smooth, legato movement.

All these common tendencies and other individual idiosyncrasies that may arise must be carefully avoided either by painstaking self-analysis or, what is much better, constructive criticism by an authority on ballroom dancing.

A lady's style of dancing need be no less individualistic than that of the gentleman, but it must include above all else, adaptability. Whereas the gentleman may always dance in the same manner, providing it is a pleasing one, the lady on the other hand, must be able to adjust her style to fit that of whomever she may be dancing with. Pliability is the first requisite of a good style for the lady.

Ability to follow well, however, is not the only requirement. She must also avoid certain tendencies that most beginners have to a more or less degree. The most important of these are:

1. Looking down which fails to give a com-

pleteness to the curve of the body when stepping backwards.

2. Failure to carry the hips forward for the same reason.

3. Hunching the shoulders.

4. Not looking over the gentleman's right shoulder which causes the knees to interfere and gives a tendency to deviate to the left of a straight line when walking backwards.

5. Hooking the left arm under the partner's right instead of placing it lightly on his shoulder.

6. Tensing the right arm and hand.

7. Failure to arch the back by lifting the chest.

8. Bending back at the waist in order to give a curve to the body instead of obtaining the same result by elevating the chest and swinging the leg from the hip with an extended knee and ankle.

9. Stepping with the feet apart instead of on a line with the knees held closely together.

10. Allowing the foot to swing outward in a semicircle.

11. Tensing the muscles of the thighs and hips which may cause the step to be taken before that of the gentleman (not following).

12. Sliding heavily instead of partially raising the foot and allowing it to glide lightly into place.

13. Failure to wait for the gentleman to indicate the lead.

Dancing, like any art, cannot be taught. Certain mechanical movements can be pointed out by an instructor or a book; but the ability to dance well comes from within. It is dependent upon one's responsiveness to music; sense of rhythm; appreciation of line. But since these qualities in turn are fostered by a definite knowledge of the physical element—technique, we find that the elusive subject of style leads us back to our starting point. In other words, the cultivation of distinctive dancing begins with a firm mechanical foundation. An index to good style, therefore, will consist largely of a summary or synthesis of what has gone before.

The following statements cover the essential requirements necessary to the attainment of a good dance technique:

1. Acquire a good carriage by walking correctly and by the practice of suitable exercises.
2. Obtain poise or balance in dancing by al-

lowing the weight to remain on the supporting foot until the moving foot is in place.

3. Learn to glide smoothly alone both forward and backward with no up or down movement of the body by allowing the knees to bend exactly the same amount with each step.

4. Remember that the length of one's step depends upon the degree to which the supporting knee is bent.

5. Swing the leg freely from the hip with an extended knee and ankle.

6. When walking step directly forward or backward with the knees held closely together.

7. Relax the muscles of the legs to avoid a jerky movement.

8. With each step allow the hips to sway slightly toward the supporting foot without moving the upper body.

9. Have the sensation of pushing with the chest while carrying the hips well forward at the same time.

10. Maintain a position of the body parallel to that of your partner's.

11. If the step allows, place your foot as

closely as possible to that of your partner which is diagonally opposite.

12. Dance with the shoulders and arms relaxed except for a firm support with the gentleman's right arm at the lady's waist.

Although this book is primarily a discussion on technique, let us not forget that ballroom dancing is above all a means of recreation. While one's capacity for enjoyment increases, as a rule, with one's acquisition of knowledge, the latter qualification must remain a means to an end and not an end in itself. Thus if pure technique becomes formalized into set, mechanical movements, it defeats its own purpose. But on the other hand, if the necessary technique is mastered, retained, and then dismissed from consciousness, it will serve its required usefulness as a framework for a good style and increased enjoyment on an artistic level.

The following aphorisms call attention to a number of features that one associates with good style:

Walk with style to dance with style.

A correct position is the easiest position.

One's dancing is judged largely by one's appearance on the floor.

A good style creates a pleasing picture.

Graceful lines are more important than intricate figures.

Simple curved lines are more attractive than angles.

Style is harmonious movement.

Mannerisms, if inharmonious, are a detriment to style.

Technique is a means to an end; style is the result.

A good style out of place is a bad style; exhibition dancing is not for the ballroom.

Style is good technique made distinctive through individualization.

Adaptability determines the practical value of style.

Appearance determines the æsthetic value of style.

“Grace” [or style] ¹ is the ideal of purity and beauty of movement, and that ease and elegance in holding and moving the body which attracts and charms all beholders”—(B. KLEMM).

¹ Author's insertion.

PART II

CHAPTER VII

THE WALTZ

Introduction:

THE waltz as the oldest of the modern ball-room dances will be considered first. Introduced into the French court in the sixteenth century by Catherine de Medici as the *volte*, it was made popular by her son, Henri III. The basic figure then was a "valse a deux pas" or two-step waltz. It remained for Germany to evolve the modern form of the dance where its favor was stimulated by many captivating waltz tunes. The first of these melodies was "Ach! du lieber Augustine," published in 1770. A few years later the waltz was reintroduced in Paris in its modernized form as a "trois-pas" or three-step figure, when it was presented at the opera. The immense popularity of this dance quickly spread to England and America. Although at first vigorously opposed by certain influences, its manifestly attractive features gradually overcame all opposition. After more

than one hundred and fifty years of trial and competition, the waltz is still with us in practically its original form.

This modern form of the waltz, which is usually played at a tempo considerably less than that of the popular Viennese waltz of the past century, is more conducive to variation and individuality. These diverse figures, however, must be made neither as a substitute for the basic step nor at the expense of rhythm as so often occurs. Because these two inherent qualities of the waltz are disregarded by the great majority of people, this dance, as a result, has lost much of its original character.

The most commonly used figures that form the basis for the modern waltz are the following:

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. Basic Waltz Figure | 4. Rock-step |
| 2. Waltz Turn | 5. Canter-walk |
| 3. Hesitation | 6. Waltz-walk |

THE BASIC WALTZ FIGURE

General Description:

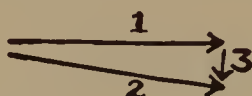
A ballroom dance develops from the desire to interpret in bodily movement a certain rhythm

expressed by music. The dance may be a stimulus for the musical composition, as in the case of the polka and fox-trot, or, on the other hand, the music may lead to the development of the dance as occurred with the tango and waltz. But since music and dancing are so closely allied and inseparable, their growth as a rule is both reciprocal and simultaneous.

The waltz expresses better than any other dance this complement of step to its accompanying music. The basic figure of the waltz is the most appropriate combination of movements yet devised combining the greatest amount of variation with the utmost simplicity; step and music are in perfect harmony. Therefore, to understand the significance of the basic waltz figure it is necessary to first analyze its accompaniment.

Waltz pieces are written in three-four time; *i.e.*, there are three quarter beats to each measure. By listening closely we will be able to hear a decided emphasis on the first beat of each measure. Thus we count ONE, two, three. The three steps of the primary waltz figure correspond to these three beats of music. The first and accented step is taken either directly forward or

backward—*i.e.*, at right angles to the line of the shoulders. The second step is to the side of the first while the third one brings the feet together. The first and third steps are always made with the same foot. Thus a single waltz figure will describe on the floor a right angle triangle:



Detailed Description:

We have just observed that the first step of each waltz figure is accented to correspond with the accented first beat of the measure. In dancing an accent is denoted by a downward movement. In order to keep perfect balance this downward movement is made by flexing the supporting knee. Since the stepping leg must be extended to preserve good lines, the length of this first step will be determined by the degree to which the supporting knee is bent (see Chapter III). Thus, on the first beat of the measure or count *one*, the supporting knee—say the right—is flexed, while at the same time the left leg is swung freely from the hip either forward or backward. As the weight is being transferred to

this foot, the knee should be allowed to give slightly but without dipping.

On count *two* the right foot is placed a few inches to the side of the left, with this knee also slightly flexed.

The third step is merely a transfer of weight to the left foot again as it is drawn easily to the right with a straightening of both knees. This closing step, it is important to remember, *must not be hurried*, since the contact of the feet should coincide with the third beat of the measure. Since every waltz figure must finish with straight knees, and consequently begins with a downward movement of the body, there is thus produced a subtle undulating motion which is one of the most attractive features of the waltz. This movement may be expressed thus:



The reason for stepping directly forward or backward on the first step will be readily understood when the figure is executed with a partner. It is based on the principle, as previously stated, that with every step thus made the foot should be

placed as closely as possible to the partner's corresponding foot that is diagonally opposite.

The lady and gentleman alike should master both the forward and backward waltz steps since the combination of these two movements is the foundation of the turn.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Not bending the supporting knee as the first step is being taken which results in either a loss of balance or lack of accent.

(2) Stepping diagonally forward or backward instead of on a line at right angles to the line of the shoulders. This causes the lady's and gentleman's corresponding feet to be apart producing awkward lines and loss of poise.

(3) Placing the foot too widely to the side on the second step which produces a spread appearance and makes turning more difficult.

(4) Closing too quickly on the third step which gives a tendency to hurry the first step of the succeeding figure, thus throwing the dancers out of rhythm.

(5) Straightening the knees too quickly on

the closing step which gives a broken, jerky appearance to the waltz.

The Lead:

For the commencing figure the lead should be clearly indicated by a sideward pressure preceding the closing third step. But if no variation of step is to be made, the rhythm of the succeeding movements can easily be sensed by any one who understands the basic figure.

THE WALTZ TURN

General Description:

Before analyzing the waltz turn which is the basic movement of this dance, let us keep in mind three important rules regarding the execution of turns with a partner while in the closed or waltz position:

1. A turn is always made in the direction of the forward foot, *e.g.*, during a turn to the right the right foot must be kept in advance of the left.
2. This forward foot should be held practically in contact with the partner's corresponding

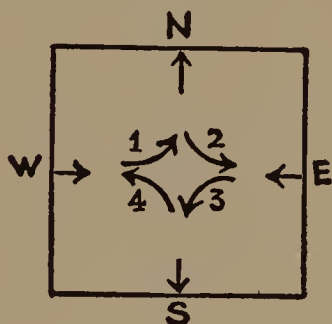
foot, *i.e.*, the left feet are together for a left turn and the right feet for a right turn.

3. A turn is made by a forward and backward movement, *e.g.*, if the weight is first transferred forward on the right foot in a turn to the right, the following step must be back on the left. Of course in the waltz this forward or backward step is made only on the first beat of the measure.

Strictly speaking, a waltz turn should occupy one bar or two measures of music. This necessitates making a half turn on each figure. Since it is difficult for the beginner to accomplish this, we will first describe a turn consisting of four waltz figures to four measures or two bars of music. Since the gentleman as a rule begins a step with his left foot, we will describe only the left turn; although of course the same rules apply to a right turn as well.

The first waltz figure—of three steps—is taken forward beginning with the left foot; the second is back with the right; the third is again forward with the left, and the fourth is back with the right. If a quarter turn is made on each of the four figures, the dancer will finish in practically the same position as where he began. The

diagram roughly illustrates the path described in making this turn in which each of the four walls are faced successively. Beginning at (w) the first and third figures are taken forward while the second and fourth are taken backward.



Detailed Description:

As a supplement to the first rule—that the forward foot determines the direction of the turn—let us add that the toe is turned *out* when stepping forward and turned *in* when stepping backward. This action of the foot simplifies a great deal any turn made with a partner since it eliminates much of the effort required to pivot through an equal space.

Accordingly, as the gentleman swings forward his left foot and places it close to his partner's left with the toe turned well out, the lady

simultaneously swings back her right foot with the toe turned in. When the weight has been transferred, a quarter turn to the left will have been made. The figure is completed by stepping to the side and then closing.

To make the second quarter of the turn the above action is reversed, *i.e.*, the gentleman swings back with his right foot, toeing in, as the lady toes out with her left.

The last two figures, or the second half of the turn, is a replica of the first half; the gentleman takes a waltz step forward with his left foot leading and then back again with the right.

The right turn should be practiced in the same manner excepting that the above action is reversed; that is, the gentleman waltzes forward beginning with his right foot and back with the left. A turn may be commenced by stepping first either forward or backward at the leader's discretion.

After mastering this turn of four measures, one should practice the two-measure turn which necessitates the making of a half-turn on each waltz figure. This requires a pivoting or twisting action on the ball of the foot combined with the

toeing out and in. Otherwise the technique is the same. This latter turn is progressive since the first step of each figure is taken in the same general direction.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Forgetting to alternate the backward with the forward waltz figures.

(2) Not taking the forward and backward steps of equal length. The gentleman as a rule has a tendency to shorten his backward step while the lady tends to confine her forward one.

(3) Failure to toe *out* when stepping forward and *in* when stepping backward.

The Lead:

For this ordinary turn the lead is quite simple: a slight forward or pulling pressure given with the arm or hand just before stepping backward, and a subsequent relaxation on waltzing forward. With any forward movement the lead or pressure is given not so much with the arm as with the body in accordance with the retarded action of the lady's step.

THE HESITATION

General Description:

As the word implies, a hesitation figure is one in which a definite stop is made. In the waltz this pause, as a rule, occupies one measure of music. Although in exhibition dancing the hesitation may take on numerous guises, in the ball-room it is subject to quite definite rules, the most important of which are as follows:

1. The hesitation, or pause, is begun on the first accented beat and is held through the remaining two beats of the measure.

2. After stopping with the weight on either foot, the free leg is allowed to continue its swing in the direction that the dancer has been moving until the leg is fully extended.

3. Every hesitation, like every basic waltz figure, is finished with both knees straight.

Detailed Description:

The hesitation, like the basic waltz figure, begins with a slight downward movement on the first accented beat of the measure. That is the supporting knee—say the right—bends slightly

while with the left foot a step is taken either forward or backward. As the weight is being transferred to this foot, the knee is allowed to flex slightly, acting like a shock absorber. The description thus far is common to all waltz figures. The following movement, however, is peculiar to the "hesitation": the right or free foot, instead of being placed to the side as in the basic figure, is allowed to swing freely in the direction in which the dancer is moving; *e.g.*, if the gentleman while waltzing forward, stops with his weight on the left foot, his right leg continues to swing forward while the lady's corresponding left leg swings back. Simultaneously with the above movement both knees are gradually straightened, until, at the finish of the measure, the legs are completely extended.

The correct execution of this figure will produce the same undulating movement common to most waltz steps; that is, the hesitation begins with a downward movement which is proportionate to the length of the step, and finishes with the knees straight.

It is important to remember that the free or hesitating foot must receive no weight since the

following step is always made with this same foot. However, the toe should be touched lightly to the floor as it thus definitely determines its position.

Since the corresponding legs of the couple will then be parallel, the resulting picture will consequently be more attractive. By turning in the heel a sweeping line will be carried unbroken to the toe. If now the lady, when hesitating backward, exaggerates the arch of the back by elevating the chest, the resulting picture will be one of the most attractive in ballroom dancing. The gentleman's position, on the other hand, should accommodate itself to the picture by a slight inclination of the body.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Loss of balance by failing to bend the supporting knee when stepping either forward or backward on the first accented beat.

(2) Not allowing this stepping knee to give as the weight is being transferred which breaks the continuity of the undulating rhythm.

(3) Quickly straightening the knee on the second beat of the measure instead of distribut-

ing the movement evenly throughout the last two counts.

(4) Allowing weight to fall upon the hesitating foot.

(5) Swinging the free leg in an unrestrained manner to an indefinite height which has a tendency to produce broken lines with a resulting loss of style.

(6) Failure to turn in the heel of the hesitating foot.

The Lead:

For this figure the lead must always be definitely given. If hesitating forward the lead is a firm pressure exerted with the right arm or hand as the weight is being transferred on the first accented beat of the measure. This pressure, if maintained for the duration of the measure, prevents the lady from taking another backward step. If the following step is to be forward, the gentleman merely relaxes the arm; if backward, he gently pulls his partner forward.

If the gentleman wishes to hesitate while waltzing backward, no lead with the arm is necessary since by stopping on the first count the

lady is prevented from stepping forward. Care must be taken that the lead with the forward hesitation is not delayed. The natural tendency is to give it as the leg is being swung forward instead of on the count preceding this movement.

THE ROCK-STEP

General Description:

The rock-step can be considered as a variation of the hesitation. The important differences are:

(1) To maintain the same relative position of the feet after taking the step on the first beat of the measure instead of allowing the free leg to continue its swing.

(2) To execute a forward and backward "rocking" movement, as the name of the step implies, which requires at least two measures of music. A hesitation, on the other hand, may be made in one direction only.

In other respects the technique of the two figures is identical.

Detailed Description:

This figure is begun in the usual manner by stepping on the first beat of the measure as the

supporting knee is flexed to maintain balance. After this first step has been taken, however, the other foot, instead of being swung in the same direction, is kept in place while both knees gradually straighten. From this position the movement can be reversed by transferring the weight to the free foot in the same manner.

The action of the knees, which determines the gracefulness of the figure, is exactly the same as that for the hesitation, *viz.*: (1) the supporting knee bends, (2) the knee of the moving leg also bends slightly as it receives weight, and (3) both knees gradually straighten. These three actions of the knees, which produce the subtle undulating movement so characteristic of the waltz, coincide more or less closely with the three counts of the measure.

While executing the rock-step the position of the upper body is most important. The natural tendency is to allow it to swing forward when stepping forward and backward when stepping backward. Instead, the movement of the body should be contrary to the direction of the step. Thus when rocking forward, the back should be

arched, while on the backward step the body may be allowed to curve slightly forward.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Altering the position of the free foot after the first step has been taken which disarranges the parallel lines of the legs.

(2) Not completely straightening both knees.

(3) Straightening both knees too quickly.

(4) Allowing the upper part of the body to sway in the direction of the step instead of a contrary counter-balancing movement.

The Lead:

The lead for the rock-step is very similar to that for the hesitation of which this figure is a variation. The pressure may be applied less abruptly, however, and is maintained for the repetition of the movement in the opposite direction. If the lady is well poised and does not anticipate her partner's movements, she will be able to sense the position of his legs and thus distinguish this figure from the regular hesitation.

THE CANTER-WALK

General Description:

This third variation of the waltz probably owes its name to its peculiar rhythm which is suggestive of the cantering gait of a horse. While it may be considered as another form of the hesitation, it is best described as a walk consisting of alternate quick and slow steps. These steps are taken on the first and third beats of the measure. The quick step is made on the first accented beat and is followed by the slow one which covers the last two counts. Unlike the hesitation, this figure as a rule is executed as a smooth, level glide instead of with an undulating movement.

If one's ear has been accustomed to this rhythm, the step is not difficult to execute. At the same time it is one of the most interesting and attractive, but least known waltz figures to be seen in the ballroom.

Detailed Description:

The canter-walk may be commenced with either foot leading, but if repeated, each figure will begin with the same foot. Thus if the gen-

tleman steps forward with his left foot on the first beat of a measure, the same foot will begin the next measure. In other words the canter-walk becomes an abbreviated hesitation in which the second or hesitation step is delayed for only one count and then receives the weight on the third beat, whereas the usual hesitation is maintained for the full measure.

In the execution of this figure two tendencies must be guarded against. The first is a natural desire to make the two steps of unequal length—a short quick step and a long slow one. The second common mistake is to produce a “lame duck” effect by dipping slightly on the second long step. Instead, the two steps should be smooth and of equal length although unequal in tempo.

Common Mistakes:

- (1) Disregard of rhythm by failing to step on the first and third beats of the measure.
- (2) Making the two steps of unequal length.
- (3) Failure to give a legato movement to the second step.
- (4) Dipping on the second step.

The Lead:

The lead for the canter-walk, as for the hesitation, must slightly anticipate the first step. This arresting pressure is maintained for only one count, and then the arm is partly relaxed to allow the lady to transfer her weight on the third and last beat of the measure. In this respect it differs from the hesitation lead since the pressure for the latter is held for the duration of the measure.

THE WALTZ-WALK

Description:

As a simple means of giving variety to the waltz, the plain dance-walk as described in Part I, is one of the easiest, but it must be used sparingly. Otherwise the waltz would degenerate into a fox-trot to three-four rhythm and thus lose most of its beauty and character.

In the waltz-walk one step is taken to each beat of music, although a broken-time rhythm is sometimes used in which two counts are given to each step.

While the steps are taken in a straight line, one should subconsciously sense the three-four

rhythm in order to swing correctly into another figure. If one gets out of rhythm while executing the basic waltz figure, by means of a few walking steps the correct accent may easily be regained.

It is oftentimes necessary to take these few steps on a crowded floor to avoid collisions, but upon returning to the basic figure care must always be taken that the feet close on the third beat of the measure.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Walking too much at the expense of the basic figure.

(2) Walking out of rhythm with the music.

(3) Failure to correctly blend the walking steps with the other figures.

The Lead:

When going into a plain forward walk the only lead necessary is to slightly relax the arm and step forward with decision and firmness. But upon resuming the basic figure the closing movement on the third beat of the measure must be

clearly anticipated by a sideward pressure given on the preceding step.

If the walk is to be followed by a hesitation, canter-step, or other figure, the corresponding lead must be indicated in advance of this new variation.

CHAPTER VIII

WALTZ COMBINATIONS

Introduction :

By judiciously combining the few basic figures described in Chapter VII, one's dancing can be made very interesting; provided, of course, that the foundation technique has been sufficiently perfected. Only a few of the more simple combinations will be described here, but the clever dancer, with practice, will be able to improvise numerous others as well as to adapt himself to the changing fashions in dance steps.

The names of the following combinations have been chosen by the author merely as a means of conveniently designating their respective movements :

1. Double Hesitation.
2. Hesitation Waltz Turn.
3. Wave Waltz.
4. Cross Waltz.

5. Hesitation Canter Turn.
6. Open Banjo Turn.

The Double Hesitation:

After making a single hesitation with either foot while waltzing forward, step back with the hesitating foot and allow the other foot to swing backward. Of course the lady allows her corresponding leg to swing in the same direction as that of her partner as he indicates the nature of the combination by an appropriate lead.

The Hesitation Waltz Turn:

This combination, like the above, begins with a forward hesitation, but instead of repeating the hesitation in the opposite direction, a backward waltz step is taken on which a half turn is made. By repeating the combination of a forward hesitation and a backward waltz step the turn can be completed.

The turn can be made in either direction, depending on which foot the pause is made with. If the hesitation is made with the weight on the right foot while the left swings forward, the turn

must be made to the right, since the free left foot swings back to commence the turn.

The Wave Waltz:

The wave waltz is executed without alteration of the basic waltz figure; its effectiveness being based entirely upon a change of position while turning. In its simplest form the wave waltz can be described as a half turn in one direction followed by a half turn in the opposite direction. But while turning the gentleman brings his partner directly to the side in what will be called the "banjo" position as opposed to the "closed" or "waltz" position as usually employed.

In order to lead easily into this combination, the gentleman makes a quarter turn to the right while waltzing forward beginning with the right foot. This is followed by another quarter turn in the same direction made by taking a waltz step backward with the left foot leading. Simultaneously with this second measure the gentleman carries his partner to his left side in which position they are facing in opposite directions. Now, instead of completing the turn, the movement is reversed by making a quarter turn to the left on

a backward waltz figure beginning with the right foot, which brings the couple back to the "closed" position. The half turn to the left is completed by waltzing forward with the left foot, and at the same time the lady is brought to the gentleman's right side. The latter is now facing forward while the lady faces in the opposite direction. The movement can be repeated by alternating the "closed" and "banjo" positions while turning.

It will be noted that one continually progresses while executing this combination.

Note also that the lady is kept always on the side toward the wall. If, on the other hand, the combination is begun by a turn to the left, the gentleman's partner will always be on the opposite side—toward the center of the room.

The Cross Waltz:

This combination, often called the "scissors," is also based upon the "banjo" position. While waltzing forward, make a slight turn to the right (or left) and simultaneously carry your partner a little to one side in preparation for the following waltz step which is taken diagonally for-

ward in the "banjo" position. As the closing step is being made on the third beat of this measure, make a slight pivot which brings your partner to the other side. The cross movement can now be repeated toward the opposing diagonal with the lady again in the "banjo" position but on your opposite side.

The Hesitation Canter Turn:

After taking two waltz steps forward beginning with the left foot, execute a hesitation while making a half turn to the left. Simultaneously carry your partner to the "banjo" position on your right side. At the completion of the hesitation take a backward canter-step (the lady forward) beginning with the free right foot. The turn can be completed with a backward waltz figure.

The Open Banjo Turn:

Besides the "closed" and "banjo" positions, another position, while it is less common, may be used occasionally if the floor is not too crowded. This is the open position in which both dancers

face in the same direction without relinquishing their holds.

The example given here, which can be applied equally as well to the fox-trot, consists primarily of two measures of walking steps and utilizes all three positions.

After completing a forward waltz figure begun with the left foot, step in place with the right on the first beat of the following measure while turning your partner to the "open" position. To complete this measure both step directly forward in the new position for two counts. The right turn is made on the next measure as follows: The gentleman, on count one, steps far around in front of his partner with his left foot. He then crosses his right foot in back of the left, and while pivoting on both feet, he allows his partner to continue her forward walk in the "banjo" position to complete the turn. The gentleman's right foot is now in position to waltz forward in the "closed" position.

CHAPTER IX

THE FOX-TROT

Introduction:

As compared to the waltz, the fox-trot is a dance of comparatively recent development. Although its exact origin is unknown, it is probably an outgrowth of some of the old ragtime dances, such as the turkey-trot which sprang up in San Francisco in 1911.

At present the only basic movement of the fox-trot is the dance-walk as described in detail in Part I. But so many varieties of steps and rhythms may be devised to vary the monotony of this walk that the fox-trot may be at the same time either the most simple or the most complicated of dances. It is this adaptiveness, aided by an abundance of excellent music, that maintains for the fox-trot its well deserved popularity. But whether one executes the most intricate figures or merely varies the plain walk with a few simple steps, the most important factor toward becom-

ing an accomplished dancer is a complete mastery of the fundamental principles described in Part I.

While innumerable odd movements, that are executed to fox-trot rhythms, occur spasmodically under various names, they are, as a rule, merely variations of some commonly known fox-trot figure. Thus if one has mastered a few of the better known figures, it will be easy to amplify one's repertoire of dance steps. For that reason only the most simple, practical, and popular variations are being described here.

As a groundwork for the beginner the following figures should be mastered, first separately and then in combination, together with their appropriate leads. Other simple figures may be employed at the teacher's discretion. The names given to these steps are more or less arbitrary ones that merely suggest their action.

1. Promenade.
2. Sideward Glide.
3. Hesitation.
4. Change-step.
5. Two-step.
6. Turns:

- (a) Promenade turn.
- (b) Pivot turn.
- (c) Progressive pivot turn.
- (d) Two-step turn.

Since the lady's step is usually the converse of that of her partner's, only the gentleman's part will be described. A good dancer is capable of executing a figure in either direction.

THE PROMENADE

General Description:

The promenade will be described first because it not only is the most simple means of varying the dance-walk, but it is also a movement based on the waltz. It might be called a waltz figure in two-four time. The movement is merely a break in the walk made by stepping to one side and then closing with the other foot without altering the rhythm.

Detailed Description:

Since fox-trot music is phrased in groups of 4, 8 and 16 counts, the following figures will be

arranged to coincide with these primary divisions. A combination of four counts is executed as follows: Beginning with the left foot take two steps forward (count 1-2); step to the side with the left foot (count 3); close with the right (count 4).

The following combination may next be practiced: walk three steps forward beginning with the left (count 1-2-3); step to the side with the right (count 4); close with the left (count 5); step forward-right (count 6); step to the side-left (count 7); close-right (count 8).

When one count is thus given to each step, the pattern described on the floor will be like that of the waltz.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Closing too quickly; not giving this movement a full count.

(2) Rising on the balls of the feet as the closing step is being made and then dropping the heels at the finish instead of maintaining the same smooth level throughout the figure.

(3) Making the separate steps disjointedly

instead of blending each movement into the next one.

The Lead:

For this figure the lead is quite simple: a sideward pressure with the right arm or hand to indicate the change of direction as for the basic waltz figure. This pressure must anticipate the new direction by being given on the step preceding the sideward movement; in the first case on the second step, and in the second combination, simultaneously with the third walking step. Upon resuming the forward walk the arm is slightly relaxed.

THE SIDEWARD GLIDE

General Description:

The "sideward glide" can be considered as a variation of the "promenade," in which the step to the side is repeated. In order to avoid interference with other dancers, the same general direction about the room, counter-clockwise, should be maintained. For this reason a quarter turn to the right is made on the step preceding the sideward movement. The figure may be executed to

either the right or the left according to the gentleman's lead.

Detailed Description:

To make a figure of eight counts take four walking steps forward beginning with the left foot (count 1-2-3-4). On the fourth step make a quarter turn to the right by toeing out with the right foot. Place the left foot to the side and close with the right (count 5-6); repeat the step-close (count 7-8). Swing back into the forward walk by turning out the left foot.

The same principles apply to a step taken to the side as one taken either forward or backward, *viz.*: the same level is maintained, the supporting knee is flexed, and the stepping leg is extended.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Bending the knees more than necessary; in this figure the knees can be kept nearly straight.

(2) Failure to extend the leg when stepping to the side.

(3) Producing an up and down motion of the

body by alternately raising and lowering the heels with each step-close movement.

The Lead:

The lead is first given for the quarter turn on the fourth walking step after which an even pressure to the side is maintained for the duration of the movement.

THE HESITATION

General Description:

Like the hesitation in the waltz this figure in the fox-trot consists primarily of a pause in the walk. It is usually held for one count. While the hesitation is subject to considerable variation, only the most natural and graceful manner of executing the step will be described here.

The "hesitation" in the fox-trot is made by definitely stopping during the forward or backward walk, and then allowing the unsupported leg to continue its swing in the direction that the dancer has been moving until this leg is fully extended. Thus, if the gentleman while walking

forward hesitates with the weight on his left foot, the right or free leg from the momentum of the forward movement will tend to continue its swing in the same direction if the muscles are sufficiently relaxed.

Detailed Description:

For an eight-count figure take three steps forward beginning with the left foot (count 1-2-3). After stopping with the weight on the left foot, allow the right leg to swing forward without receiving any weight (count 4). Of course the lady's corresponding left leg swings back simultaneously. The gentleman's right foot is now in position to begin the next series of three walking steps (count 5-6-7). This time the pause is made on the right foot while the left leg swings forward (count 8).

Unlike the waltz hesitation the supporting knee is not straightened as the pause is made in the fox-trot, since the latter dance seeks to maintain a smooth, level, gliding movement.

Although it is important that the free foot, after swinging either forward or backward, should receive no weight, it is better to touch

the toe lightly to the floor with the heel turned in. This will insure making parallel lines with the hesitating legs while giving at the same time a definiteness to the figure.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Allowing weight to be placed on the free foot.

(2) Dipping with the supporting knee which gives the appearance of reaching with the hesitating foot.

(3) Failure to allow the free foot to swing either forward or backward as the case may be.

The Lead:

Since this figure produces an abrupt change of movement, the lead must be correspondingly firm. The pressure to stop one's partner should anticipate the actual pause by its being given on the third and seventh steps respectively in the above description. Thus it precedes by a full count the movement of the swinging leg. Upon resuming the forward walk the arm is partly relaxed.

THE CHANGE-STEP

General Description:

The "change-step," according to its name, is made as follows: (1) pause in the forward walk, (2) take a backward step, (3) bring the feet together and change the weight, (4) resume the forward walk.

Detailed Description:

Take four introductory walking steps beginning with the left foot (count 1-2-3-4). Stop with the weight on the forward right foot without moving the left from its rear position—the same as in the "rock-step" of the waltz. Transfer the weight back to the left foot (count 5). Bring the right foot even with the left and transfer the weight (count 6). Step forward with the left followed by the right (count 7-8).

By pausing with the left foot in advance the figure can be duplicated with opposite foot action.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Not bringing the feet together evenly when changing.

(2) Making the change with jerky movements.

(3) Failure to leave the rear foot in position after stopping.

The Lead:

The firm pressure indicating the pause must be immediately followed by a gentle pulling to indicate the step to be taken in the opposite direction. Otherwise the tendency would be to do the ordinary "hesitation." As the feet are brought together with the backward step, the change or transfer of weight can be assisted by a slight lifting with the right arm, followed by a partial relaxation as the forward step is taken. All four actions of the leading arm—arresting, pulling, lifting, relaxing—must be carefully blended and correctly timed.

THE TWO-STEP

General Description:

In the early nineties during a revival of ballroom dancing in the United States, the two-step became very popular as a dance in itself. Since

that time with the advent of the fox-trot, the two-step has been absorbed within the wider folds of the newer dance. At present the two-step is one of the best means of giving variety to the fox-trot.

While the figure is executed to two counts of music, the weight is transferred three times which makes the title of "two-step" a misnomer. In general terms the figure can be described as consisting of three gliding steps taken in a straight line to two counts of music. The first step may be taken with either foot in any direction, the second brings the feet together, while the third step carries them apart.

Detailed Description:

A combination of eight counts can be made as follows: Take four walking steps forward beginning with the left foot (count 1-2-3-4). With the left foot leading execute a two-step diagonally forward to the left—step-close-step (count 5 and 6). Repeat the movement to the right with the right foot leading (count 7 and 8).

In the above method of counting all the numbers correspond to the accented beats of music while the "and" counts refer to the unaccented

beats. The half-count between the two figures gives one time to alternate the step.

The most essential quality of a two-step is smoothness. The three steps of this figure should be blended as if they were one. Three common causes for producing an uneven, jerky two-step are as follows:

(1) Lifting the heels on the closing step; usually accompanied by a general lifting of the entire body as a subconscious means of indicating the lead.

(2) Stiffening the knees and ankles due to the change of rhythm and a lack of knowledge of how to indicate the lead.

(3) Allowing the leading foot to leave the floor. This is usually caused by carrying the weight too far back.

In order to insure a smooth, even, unified movement let us apply a principle as explained in Chapter II: that with each step the hips are allowed to sway toward the foot that receives the weight. Thus there will be three slight movements of the hips corresponding to the three transfers of weight. If now the two-step is begun with a preliminary swaying of the hips in the di-

rection in which the figure is to be taken, while the feet and legs follow without apparent effort, the figure very likely will be made smoothly, while the hips by this natural swaying preserve a delicate balance as in walking. Besides blending the movements of each figure care must be taken that the upper body does not alter its position.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Making the figure uneven or jerky by (a) lifting the heels, (b) tensing the leg muscles, and (c) allowing the feet to leave the floor.

(2) Change of rhythm by failing to give each of the three steps a half count.

The Lead:

The lead for this figure is very important and must always be given. It is indicated by a gentle lifting pressure with the right arm or hand since this is the natural lead that is oftentimes given subconsciously. One must be careful not to raise the shoulders, the left arm, or the heels while indicating this lead since all leads should be given inconspicuously.

As stated before the most important characteristic of a strong lead is correct timing—that is, anticipating every new figure or change of direction by means of a suitable pressure for which the lady must wait. In the above combination the gentle lifting pressure should be gradually applied coincidently with the fourth walking step, or on the count preceding the beginning of the two-step. For a double two-step without turning it is necessary to relax the pressure slightly between the two figures to allow for the change of direction. Otherwise the lady would have a tendency to execute a “quick-glide” figure.

QUICK GLIDE

General Description:

This figure has the characteristics of both the “sideward glide” and the “two-step.” While having the rhythm of the latter figure, it may also be described as the former executed at double time. The quick gliding steps can be taken either directly to the side, as with the “sideward glide,” or diagonally forward like the “two-step.”

Detailed Description:

Make a slight turn to the right on the last of four introductory walking steps (count 1-2-3-4). Step-close to the side four times giving each of the eight movements a half count (count 5-and-6-and-7-and-8-and). By using the hips correctly, as explained under the "Two-step," the figure can be made very smoothly with little effort.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Loss of rhythm by failing to give each of the quick steps a half count.

(2) Tensing the muscles of the hips which tends to produce a jerky movement.

The Lead:

Since this figure begins like a "two-step" and has the same rhythm, the lead is also indicated in the same manner by a slight lifting pressure which is given on the step preceding the "quick glide." But while the arm is immediately relaxed with the completion of the "two-step," for the "quick glide" the pressure must be steadily maintained for the duration of the movement.

Of course the number of "quick glides" taken in one direction in succession is determined by the gentleman's intention with the appropriate lead.

THE PROMENADE TURN

General Description:

This turn although little used by the advanced dancer is, nevertheless, an excellent one for the beginner to practice on while mastering the basic elements and developing his sense of rhythm. A left turn of eight counts using the same movements as described under "the promenade" will be explained.

Detailed Description:

Beginning with the left foot take three walking steps forward (count 1-2-3). On the third step toe out with the left foot to begin the left turn. After stepping to the side with the right (count 4) and closing left (count 5), a half turn will have been made. Complete the turn by stepping back with the right foot while toeing in (count 6), placing the left to the side (count

7), and closing right (count 8). The steps correspond to those of the waltz turn.

Common Mistakes:

The same as apply to the “promenade” when made without turning as described above.

The Lead:

For this figure the lead is similar to that used for the ordinary “promenade,” but with the additional pressure necessary to indicate the turn.

THE PIVOT TURN

General Description:

Before analyzing this commonly used turn let us review the three general rules that apply to practically all turns made in the “closed” position:

(1) A turn is always made in the direction of the forward foot, *e.g.*, in a left turn the left foot must be kept in advance of the right.

(2) This forward foot should be kept as closely as possible to the corresponding forward

foot of your partner, *i.e.*, the left feet are held in contact for a left turn while the right feet are together during the turn to the right.

(3) Generally speaking the weight is alternately transferred forward and backward while turning.

Any difficulty experienced in turning with a partner can usually be traced to the violation of one or more of the above rules.

While the actual number of steps required for the pivot turn rests with the individual, for the beginner four steps is a convenient number.

Detailed Description:

Since it is easier to lead a turn to the right, the description will be given for this figure, although the left turn should be perfected to an equal degree.

Beginning with the left foot take four walking steps forward (count 1-2-3-4). On the fourth step begin the turn by toeing out with the right foot. While keeping the feet in the same relative position continue the turn by transferring the weight back to the left foot (count 5), forward on the right (count 6), and back again on the

left (count 7). After completing the turn step forward with the right (count 8).

With each transfer of weight the foot is turned toward the right, *i.e.*, the forward foot toes out while the back foot turns in.

With practice the same turn can be made with two steps instead of four, but a stronger pivoting action and a firmer lead are required.

To prevent a rocking movement of the body the knees must be allowed to give softly with each transfer of weight.

The correct use of the body is also important for the execution of a turn with little effort. By anticipating each step with a twisting movement of the hips and shoulders in the direction of the turn, combined with a slight swaying in the same direction, the making of any pivot turn can be greatly facilitated.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Failure to maintain a position parallel to that of your partner.

(2) Not twisting the foot in the direction of the turn.

(3) Allowing the forward foot to separate from the corresponding foot of your partner.

(4) Permitting the upper body to rock forward and backward because of stiff knees.

(5) Allowing the knees to bend too much which gives a "weak-kneed" appearance.

The Lead:

An easy execution of a pivot turn depends largely upon correct timing of the lead with the actions of the feet and hips. Just as the hips suggest the movement of the feet, the leading arm in turn anticipates the action of the hips. The amount of pressure required for the lead is proportional to the momentum of the turn. A fast pivot requires more force than a slower one with more steps.

THE PROGRESSIVE PIVOT TURN

General Description:

This commonly used figure, as the name implies, is a pivot turn made while progressing. That is, after the first half of the turn is made, a

few backward steps are taken before the turn is completed. Thus while the ordinary pivot turn is executed in one spot, the progressive turn employing the same principles combines with it a forward movement.

Detailed Description:

For a right progressive turn of eight counts take four steps forward beginning with the left foot (count 1-2-3-4). On the fourth step toe well out with the right foot and simultaneously pivot strongly to the right. To complete the half turn step back with the left while toeing in (count 5). Take two more backward steps—right and left (count 6-7). On count 7, since the right foot is now forward, the turn can be completed by toeing in with the left foot and pivoting sharply at the same time. Step forward with the right (count 8) and the turn is completed.

The figure may be summarized briefly as eight steps taken in the same general direction with a half turn to the right made on the fourth step and repeated on the seventh.

For the left turn the pivoting action can be made on the third and sixth steps respectively; or, in other words, whenever the left foot is relatively in advance of the right.

While the number of steps taken backward connecting the two halves of the turn is immaterial, the three principles that are applicable to all pivot turns must be kept constantly in mind.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Failure to utilize the foot action when turning.

(2) Lack of coördination between the step and the impetus for the pivot furnished by the body, and especially the twisting action of the hips and shoulders.

(3) Failure to keep forward the foot that indicates the direction of the turn.

(4) Allowing this forward foot to separate from the corresponding foot of your partner. The lady tends to allow the forward or non-supporting foot to separate from that of her partner on the first half of the pivot, while the gentleman often does the same on the last half when he is pivoting on the foot that is relatively in back.

The Lead:

Many gentlemen have difficulty in making a half turn on one pivoting step because of incorrect timing of their lead. This firm pressure with the right arm and hand must exactly coincide with the transfer of weight to the pivoting foot. In the above description this occurs on the fourth and seventh counts respectively for the right turn. If the lead is delayed, the lady will have no knowledge of what the figure is to be like, and thus will be unable to adjust her movements so as to assist in making the turn.

THE TWO-STEP TURN

General Description:

This useful turn is made while executing a double two-step as previously described. A half turn is made on each of the two two-steps. Since the three steps of a two-step figure must be taken in a straight line, it follows that the actual pivoting movement must occur on the steps preceding and at the finish of the figure.

Detailed Description:

For a right turn take four introductory walking steps (count 1-2-3-4). On the fourth step turn the right toe well out since the turn is to be made in this direction. After this quarter turn is made, the first two-step with the left foot leading can then be taken directly to the side. By means of a pivoting movement at the finish of this figure initiated by the momentum of the body, the dancer is now in a position to easily complete the turn with the second two-step begun with the right foot.

The same principle can be applied to a left turn by taking three steps forward, toeing out with the left foot, and, after completing the turn, taking an extra step forward to complete the 8-count combination.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Failure to take the first two-step directly to the side which makes it difficult to complete the turn on the second figure.

(2) Not making the turn smoothly for one of the reasons mentioned under "The Two-step."

(3) Failure to vary the direction of the turn.

The Lead:

This turn requires a lead that is a combination of the leads for the pivot turn and the ordinary two-step. While indicating a pivoting movement on the count preceding the first two-step, there must be given simultaneously a slight lifting pressure which is the distinctive lead for this figure. Since the momentum of the body combined with the rotary movement necessitates the alternation of the two-step figures, there is no need to relax the upward pressure until the turn is completed. If on the other hand both two-steps were taken in a forward direction without turning, it would be necessary to partly relax the arm for an instant on the half count separating the two figures.

CHAPTER X

FOX-TROT COMBINATIONS

THE variation of one's dancing depends largely upon the skill with which one combines the few basic figures. This in turn is dependent upon a thorough technique including the ability to accurately lead or follow.

A few effective combinations which will suggest others are as follows:

1. Sideward Two-step Glide.
2. Double Hesitation.
3. Hesitation Two-step Turn.
4. Progressive Two-step Turn.
5. The Wave.
6. Banjo Wave.
7. Hesitation Quick-Glide Turn.
8. Twirling.

The Sideward Two-step Glide:

This combination as the title suggests consists of a two-step taken directly to the side fol-

lowed by a glide step. Since a two-step always finishes with the feet apart, the glide serves merely to bring them together again. This produces the following movement: three quick sliding steps to the side on two counts of music followed by a slow closing step occupying one whole count.

The lead consists of a slight lifting pressure for the two-step accompanied by a quarter turn to avoid interference with other dancers, which is immediately followed by a relaxation of the arm to allow for the slower closing step. This differentiates the movement from the "quick glide."

The Double Hesitation:

Like the waltz combination of the same name, this movement begins with a forward hesitation followed by a backward step with the hesitating foot while the other leg is allowed to swing in the same direction without receiving weight. The lady's movements correspond to those of her partner in order to preserve parallel lines.

The Hesitation Two-step Turn:

This combination corresponds to the "hesitation waltz turn" as previously described, em-

ploying the same steps with a change of rhythm. In order to make a half turn first hesitate forward, next, step back with the free foot while toeing in, and then two-step to the side completing the half turn. By repeating the above movements the full turn can be made in eight counts. One can turn in either direction depending upon which foot the pause is made with.

The lead is a combination of three blended pressures: (1) arresting for the hesitation, (2) pulling for the backward step, (3) lifting for the two-step.

The Progressive Two-step Turn:

After making the first half of a progressive pivot turn, a two-step can be taken to complete the turn. Since a single two-step brings the accent of the music on the alternate foot, the movement repeated in the opposite direction will restore the original accent if it is so desired.

The lead begins with that for the "progressive pivot" and is followed without relaxation of the arm by an additional lifting pressure for the two-step.

The Wave:

This variation is based on the "change step." While executing the forward and backward movement a slight progression is made sidewise. In order to swing smoothly into the "wave" pause with the weight on the right foot while making a quarter turn to the right, and bring the feet together. Now step back with the right and again bring the left foot even with it. The number of forward and backward change steps taken is dependent upon the gentleman's lead which is similar to that used for the single change figure as previously described. When the quarter turn is made to the right with the right foot leading the forward and backward movement, the progression of the couple will be to the left, since it is produced by crossing with the right foot accompanied by a twisting movement of the hips in the same direction which gives the characteristic wave effect.

The Banjo Wave:

This combination is a variation of the above movement in which the forward and backward change steps are taken in the "banjo" position.

Thus after a couple have reached the side position, each makes a half turn alternately to the right and left. If the gentleman begins the figure with his partner on his right or the wall side, each forward and backward step, which is taken in the same direction, will be made with the gentleman's right foot and the lady's left respectively.

The Hesitation Quick-Glide Turn:

This turn can be made more easily to the left. For that reason pause for the forward hesitation with the weight on the left foot. From this position take a backward step with the right foot while toeing in and then complete the turn with several "quick-glide" steps to the left. During this latter movement the gentleman, acting as a pivot, takes his small sliding steps almost in place while turning.

Twirling:

By "twirling" is meant a continual pivoting movement, usually to the right, during which a definite progression is made. Although continued twirling is impractical on a crowded floor,

under suitable conditions it makes an interesting variation for the advanced dancer.

Since the ability to twirl well comes only with long practice and is dependent upon the combined abilities of both dancers, only a few important suggestions will be given here which may enable a couple to more easily master this fascinating movement.

1. Employ a firmer hold than that used for ordinary dancing to allow for the centrifugal force caused by the rapid rotary movement.

2. Keep the feet in contact with the floor at all times in order to be able to slide smoothly into each step.

3. When twirling to the right hold the right knees in contact, or nearly so, to steady the movement.

4. In order to travel in a straight line reach well around with the left foot on every alternate step since the position of this foot largely determines the direction one takes.

5. Good balance—which is the keynote of twirling—is determined to a considerable extent by the action of the hips, the importance of which has been previously emphasized. That is with

each transfer of weight the hips should be allowed to sway toward the foot receiving the weight. Moreover, if each step made with the left foot is preceded by a forward swing of the left hip, as for all pivoting movements, one can twirl with little effort.

6. One can pivot entirely on the balls of the feet; on the ball of one and the heel-and-ball of the other; or on the heel-and-ball of both feet. That is, in the latter movement one steps first on the heel and then allows the weight to roll smoothly to the ball of the foot. Many consider this method the easiest.

7. Dizziness, which troubles most beginners, can be overcome by continued practice in twirling.

8. In general the same principles apply to the steps taken in twirling as to those of the basic dance-walk.

CHAPTER XI

THE FRENCH TANGO

Introduction:

IF the waltz can be called the most beautiful, and the fox-trot the most popular of the modern ballroom dances, the tango may be described as the most fascinating. Its distinctive rhythm, decisive accent, and deliberate tempo provide an excellent background for a practicable, interesting, and attractive ballroom dance. From the rough, vulgar dance of the Argentine cowboy the tango has been modified and refined by the Parisians into a dignified, expressive form that rivals the waltz in beauty and the fox-trot in popularity.

While tango music, as a rule, is written in two-four time, it is usually played like a four-four rhythm with each eighth note distinctly marked by the bass. But as in the fox-trot the ordinary walking steps are taken only on the alternate accented beats.

Due, however, to the manner of phrasing the various figures and combinations the tango is quite different in character from the fox-trot. Unlike the latter dance and also the waltz, which tend to reflect the phrasing of their music with counts of four or its multiple, the tango figures may consist of either an even or odd number of counts which blend imperceptibly from one to the other.

In order to maintain the reserved style of this dance one should be careful to eliminate all unnecessary movement above the hips without giving a suggestion of stiffness; for while the tango is essentially a smooth and plastic dance, yet it lacks the freedom and unrestraint of the fox-trot, one-step, or waltz.

This effect of restraint, which is another characteristic of the ballroom tango, is produced by a careful correlation of movement and rest. Instead of a continued flowing movement, which is consistent with fox-trot or waltz rhythms, the steps in the tango are taken, as a rule, more or less quickly, and are usually followed or preceded by a definite pause which tends to preserve the

slow tempo of the dance without permitting it to be languid.

The counts accompanying the description of the following figures and combinations will be given in the same manner as for the fox-trot, *i.e.*, each accented beat of the measure corresponding to an ordinary walking step will receive a full count, while any movement or rest occupying a half beat will be designated by "and." For example, the "promenade" figure will be counted as follows: 1-2-and-3-and. Each of the first two steps, which are taken on the accented beats, receive a full count. The two quick steps that follow are given a half count each, while the figure is completed with a pause of one-half count with the feet together.

Like all other dances the tango is composed largely of a few basic figures that can be combined in innumerable ways. Of course when used in combinations, these steps are subject to considerable variation. The most important and frequently employed of the tango figures will be designated by the following names:

1. Promenade.
2. Sideward Cross-step.
3. Corté.
4. Rock-step.
5. Change-step.

THE PROMENADE

General Description:

The "promenade" in structure is similar to the figure of the same name described under the fox-trot. But the distinctive rhythm of the tango music gives an entirely different character to the step in this dance.

Two ways of executing the "promenade" will be described. Figure (b) is a modern version of (a).

While according to custom the gentleman begins a tango dance with his right foot, subsequent figures may commence with either foot.

Detailed Description:

(a) Beginning with the right foot take two steps forward, right-left (count 1-2). Place the right to the side (count "and"); close with the left (count 3); rest (count "and").

(b) Instead of bringing the feet together on the count of 3, the left foot may be carried in advance of the right.

The "promenade" can be varied also by closing to the left.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Executing the "promenade" like a fox-trot figure without regard for the different rhythm.

(2) Too much bodily movement.

(3) Failure to observe the rest at the completion of the figure.

The Lead:

The lead for (a) is the same as that for the "promenade" of the fox-trot while observing the difference in rhythm. In certain combinations however, when the weight is not to be transferred to the closing foot, the lead for the side step is followed by a firm, lifting pressure which indicates that the following step is to be made with the same foot.

For (b) the lead corresponds more with that for the two-step since the quickened movements are continued in the same general direction. On

the second step a lifting pressure with the leading arm should be given to anticipate the double-time steps.

THE SIDEWARD CROSS-STEP

General Description:

This figure, the action of which is suggested by the title, is peculiar to the tango. While it requires considerable practice to execute the "sideward cross-step" correctly, it not only is very effective when well done, but also is one of the most popular tango steps.

As the name implies the movement is made directly to the side and the legs are crossed in stepping. The figure, as a rule, is made only to the left.

While many couples open slightly when beginning this figure and thus eliminate the actual crossing of the legs, the approved and most attractive manner is to execute the step in the "closed" position.

Detailed Description:

Beginning with the L foot step directly to the side (count 1); slip the R foot over the L and place it a few inches to the left (count 2); re-

move the L foot and again step to the side (count "and"); close with the R (count 3), and rest for one-half count (count "and").

The lady meanwhile must carefully observe the following three rules in order to successfully execute the figure:

1. Resist the tendency to open to the right by continuing to look over the gentleman's right shoulder.

2. While crossing with the left foot turn the knee and toe well to the left; that is, cross with the heel leading.

3. Delay the crossing step until after the gentleman has begun the corresponding movement; in other words do not lead.

Since both the lady and gentleman are crossing forward while retaining the "closed" position, their steps must be carefully timed in order to avoid interference.

Common Mistakes:

- (1) Changing from the "closed" to the "open" position.
- (2) Hurrying the cross-step.
- (3) Making the side steps too short.
- (4) Tending to toe in with the crossing foot.

The Lead:

Since this is practically the only figure in the tango that is executed directly to the side, the lead is merely a firm, steady pressure that indicates the direction of the movement. However a slight turning pressure which brings forward the lady's left hip will more clearly indicate the cross step.

THE CORTE

General Description:

The "corté" like the "sideward cross-step" has no equivalent in other modern ballroom dances. It is one of the most characteristic and intrinsic figures of the tango.

Detailed Description:

Step forward with the R foot (count 1); sweep the L leg forward as for a hesitation, but transfer to it part of your weight (count 2); immediately allow the weight to shift back to the stationary R foot (count "and"); step back with the L (count 3); rest (count "and").

In the original Argentine tango the backward

step was usually accompanied by a deep flexion of the knee followed by a pause which acted as a break in the dance movement; but the modern dignified version of the tango tends to reduce all the figures to their simplest form. Thus the supporting knee need be only slightly flexed, if at all, while the length of the pause may vary according to conditions.

This figure like many others depends largely upon the action of the knees for a smooth, easy execution. During the subtle transfers of weight the knees must act as shock absorbers and eliminate any jerky movements or rocking of the upper body.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Executing the "corté" like an ordinary hesitation with no regard for the different accent of the tango music.

(2) Transferring too much weight to the forward foot.

(3) Holding the weight there too long.

(4) Allowing the upper body to rock forward and backward with the transfer of weight.

The Lead:

Since this figure is similar to the hesitation, the same lead may be given; but in order to allow the weight to rest momentarily on the hesitating foot the arresting pressure may be slightly delayed. This is immediately followed by a firm pull with the right arm to indicate the backward step.

THE ROCK-STEP

General Description:

The "rock-step" consists of a forward and backward transfer of weight executed at double time. That is, each step receives a half count. The movement may either be executed only once and thus serve merely as a break in the walk as described under (a), or it may be repeated while making a turn in the direction of the forward foot—usually to the left as in (b).

Detailed Description:

(a) Walk forward R—L—R (count 1-2-3). After stopping with the weight on the forward R foot, transfer the weight momentarily back to the L foot which has not altered its rear position (count "and"). Quickly step forward again on

the R foot (count 4). Continue the walk L—R—L (count 5-6-7). Repeat the rocking movement with the L foot in advance (count “and”—8).

(b) Step back with the R foot (count 1). Transfer the weight forward to the L foot which has not been moved (count “and”). Immediately step back again on the R (count 2). Repeat this rocking movement twice more (count and-3-and-4). While transferring the weight forward and backward make a left turn without changing the relative position of the feet.

Since the movement is to the left, the legs should be kept slightly crossed while turning and the forward foot should be held closely to that of your partner.

The success of the “rock-step” depends largely upon the action of the knees. By keeping them in easy flexion all jerkiness can be eliminated.

While the rhythm of this figure is similar to that of the “corté,” the accent is slightly different. In the latter figure only part of one’s weight is transferred to the forward foot while in the “rock-step” the weight is evenly divided between the forward and backward steps.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Failure to keep the forward foot close to that of your partner while turning.

(2) Not relaxing the knees which causes the upper part of the body to rock forward and backward with each transfer of weight.

(3) Failure to keep a crossed position of the legs during the turn.

The Lead:

Since the "rock-step" is entirely a forward and backward movement, the lead consists of a slight forward or pulling pressure preceding the backward step immediately followed by a partial relaxation of the arm during the forward transfer of weight. If the lead is correctly timed, the lady will avert the tendency to alter the position of her feet as the first pause is made.

CHANGE-STEP

General Description:

This tango figure is the same as the change-step of the fox-trot with the slight difference of rhythm.

Detailed Description:

Take a backward step with the R foot (count 1). Step back with the L (count 2). Bring the R foot even with the L and transfer the weight (count "and"). Step forward L (count 3).

The same figure can be executed while moving forward and with either foot initiating the movement.

Common Mistakes:

(1) Failure to keep the change movement on the same level.

(2) Not bringing the feet together evenly.

(3) Failure to make the steps clean-cut and crisp.

The Lead:

The lead is the same as for the corresponding figure in the fox-trot. That is, the forward pull is followed by a slight lifting pressure to facilitate the change with a subsequent relaxation of the arm as the forward step is taken.

CHAPTER XII

TANGO COMBINATIONS

Introduction :

IN arranging the following combinations the author has made no attempt to introduce unusual or difficult steps, but rather to indicate the manner of combining figures in various attractive ways. The tango, like other modern ballroom dances, is subject to wide individual diversity. The number and variety of the combinations rests entirely upon the ingenuity and creative ability of the individual dancer.

While in general the description of the figures given in the preceding chapter will apply to the following combinations, each figure is subject to considerable variation any of which will be noted. Also as in the fox-trot and waltz use will be made of the "banjo" position.

The same manner of counting will be continued in which any movement or rest occupying a half beat of music will be designated by "and."

Combination No. 1:

Make a forward “promenade”—(figure (a) (count 1-2-and-3-and). Repeat the figure but on the closing step do not transfer the weight to the L foot (count 4-5-and-6-and). Beginning with this free L foot execute a “sideward cross-step” (count 7-8-and-9-and). Repeat the figure (count 10-11-and-12-and). Step forward with the L (count 13) and finish with a “corté” figure as described in the preceding chapter (count 14-15-and-16).

Combination No. 2:

Make a half turn to the left while executing a “promenade”—figure (a) (count 1-2-and-3-and). From this position step back with the R foot and complete the turn with three rock-steps (count 4-and-5-and-6). Step forward with the L and close to the R as in a “promenade” (count 7-and-8-and). Repeat the whole combination (count 16).

Combination No. 3:

Make a half turn to the left as follows: Walk two steps forward R—L (count 1-2). On the

second step begin a left pivot turn. Without interrupting the movement complete the half turn to the left by taking a short pivoting step with the R foot (count "and"), and simultaneously carry your partner to your right side in the "banjo" position. Place the L foot back (count 3-and). A three-quarter turn to the right is now made as follows: While the gentleman pivots with his right foot crossed behind the left, the lady takes two slow steps forward L—R (count 4-5); steps quickly to the side with the left foot and closes right, but without transferring any weight to the right foot (count and-6-and). The gentleman, meanwhile, has completed the pivot to the right, and has finished in the closed position with his partner. A "sideward cross-step" can now be made (count 7-8-and-9-and). Commence the last figure again, but after the cross-step has been taken with the right foot (count 10-11), uncross the feet and step forward with the left foot (count 12). Step quickly to the right and close with the left (count and-13-and). Execute a "change-step" as described (count 14-15-and-16).

Combination No. 4:

Execute a "promenade"—figure (b) (count 1-2-and-3-and). Then make a half turn to the left as in No. 3 (count 4-5-and-6-and). Complete the turn with a "promenade" made by stepping back with the right and closing to the left (count 7-and-8). Repeat the step-close to the side (count and-9-and). Execute a "sideward cross-step" (count 10-11-and-12-and). Step forward (count 13). Finish with a "corté" (count 14-15-and-16).

Combination No. 5:

Make a "promenade"—figure (b), but with the left foot in advance, and, without altering the relative position of the feet, repeat the double-time movement with a slight progression to the right (count 1-2-and-3-and-4). This movement corresponds to the "rock-step." Continue with a "promenade"—figure (a) but without transferring the weight to the closing left foot as in No. 1 (count 5-6-and-7-and). Commence a "sideward cross-step" (count 8-9), but with the feet crossed the gentleman pivots slowly to the left while the lady walks around him with two

slow steps followed by a step-close to her right (count 10-11-and-12-and). The gentleman is now facing backward and the lady forward in the closed position. The gentleman steps back with his left foot and does a single "rock-step" (count 13-and-14). The turn is then completed with a backward "promenade" begun with the right and closed to the left (count 15-and-16).

THE END

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